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A

Second Defence

OF THE

Diſſertation or Inquiry

Concerning the

GOSPEL

According to

MATTHEW.

Occaſioned by the

BISHOP of *LONDON's Third Paſtoral Letter.*

BEING

A FULL ANSWER to all the Reverend Mr. TWELLS hath offer'd in Three Tracts, wrote in Vindication of the ſaid GOSPEL.

By a LAYMAN.

Res Religionis non Verberibus, ſed Verbis eſt peragenda. LACTANT.

Hæ ſunt Religiones, quas ſibi a majoribus ſuis traditas, pertinaciſſimè tueri, ac defendere perſeverant; nec conſiderant quales ſunt, ſed ex hoc probatas, atque veras eſſe confidunt, quod eas Veteres tradiderunt: tantaq; eſt Autoritas Vetuſtatis, ut inquirere in eas, ſcelus eſſe dicatur. Ibid Divin. Inſtitut. lib. 2. c. 7.

LONDON:
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A

Second Defence

OF THE

Dissertation or Inquiry

Concerning the

GOSPEL

According to

MATTHEW.

Occasioned by the

Bishop of LONDON's

Third Reflections,

BEING

A FULL ANSWER to what is

in Vindication of the first

By a LAYMAN.

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A Man that is not well grounded in the Principles of the *Chriſtian Religion*, and convinced of the *bleſſed Effects* it hath all along had in the World, would be very apt to conclude, from the conſtant *Dread* and *Averſion* its *Prieſts* have ever ſhewn, to all free *Inquiry* and *Debate* concerning it, and the *cruel Methods* they have always taken, to prevent ſuch *Inquiry*——That where it is not a Part of that *Divine Law* written in our *Hearts*, there is no real Truth or Divinity in it.

The *Chriſtian Prieſts* had no ſooner new-modell'd and reduced *Chriſtianity* under certain *Articles* and *Heads*, and ſelected (without Knowledge) ſuch *Scriptures* as they thought convenient, than they made it *penal*, even to *Death*, to diſpute, or enquire into their particular *Authority*, or the *Grounds* and *Reaſons* of thoſe *Doctrines* deduced from them, and impos'd on the People's Belief —— And this *vindictive Spirit*, which appear'd ſo early in the *Chriſtian Church*, *i. e.* as ſoon as ever the *Church* had Power to exert it, hath viſibly reign'd ever ſince, within the whole Pale of it, having abated nothing during ſo many Ages, either of its Violence, or Extent; all (Chriſtian) *Prieſts*, of what Country or Sect ſoever (in Power) being agitated by the Fury of it.

This being the Caſe, for a *Chriſtian Man* to look into his own *Religion*, to the End to inform, and receive Information from others, upon what *Foundation* it ſtands, is to run his Head into wilful and immediate Danger——and 'tis well if he eſcapes with the Loſs of Fame only, even in this free Country where we live, where the *Clergy's Hands* are (with Difficulty) reſtrain'd from *Blood*; I ſay, 'tis well if he eſcapes ſo, being ſure to be branded with the invidious Names of * *falſe*, *ignorant Deiſt*, *Infidel*, *avow'd Infidel*, *writing againſt his own Convictions*, and the like opprobrious and uncharitable Terms, and expos'd to the barbarous Treatment of unthinking *Bigots* and *Enthuſiaſts*, thoſe *Beaſts of the People*, of whom, thro' the Management and precious Policy of the *Clergy*, in continually diſcouraging all ingenuous Learning and Inquiry, the far greater Part of the *Chriſtian Church* hath been, in all Ages, compoſed.

The

* See the BISHOP of *London's Paſtoral Letter*; and more particularly Mr. TWELLS's *Vindication*, *Supplement*, and *Reply*. paſſim.

The *Chriſtian Religion* being founded, as all the reform'd Churches at leaſt contend, on *written Revelation* only, That alone being held by them to be the Rule of our *Faith* and *Practice*; every Man in his Search after *Truth* in religious Matters, is naturally and unavoidably led, in his *firſt Inquiry*, to examine into the Genuineneſs of thoſe Books, which 'tis pretended contain that *Revelation*—— For 'tis not the yielding up our Underſtandings to ſtale *Authority*, or dignifying ourſelves with *a faſhionable Name*, that will intitle us to the Rewards attending true Religion.

Of this plain Truth, his *Lordſhip of London* was ſo ſenſible, that he publiſh'd not long ſince a *Paſtoral Letter*, in Defence of the Writings of the N. T. occaſion'd (as he tells us) by the *Suggeſtions of Infidels againſt them, conſider'd as a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners*; which Letter his Lordſhip directed to the People of his Dioceſe, as intended for their more particular Uſe, Inſtruction, and free Debate.

But the ſame having been ſoon perceived, by Men of diligent and impartial Study, to have fallen far ſhort of what had been promis'd in its firſt Pages, and was juſtly expected, from a Perſon of his Station in the Church; unfair (I am ſorry to ſay) in its Reaſoning, and with reſpect to the Genuineneſs, and faithful Tranſmiſſion of thoſe Writings, utterly ſuperficial, and diſſatisfactory in its Proofs. —— This gave occaſion to a *Layman* of his Lordſhip's Dioceſe, to publiſh a ſhort *Diſſertation*, or *Inquiry*, concerning the Authority of our *firſt Goſpel*, commonly called, *according to St. Matthew* —— The Author chuſing to take the firſt Book that came to hand, purpoſely to demonſtrate, in that ſhort Compaſs, to the World, either the little Knowledge his Lordſhip had of the *Suggeſtions of Infidels* againſt ſome Writings of the N. T. or elſe his Want of Fidelity, in ſtating thoſe *Suggeſtions* ingenuouſly, and anſwering

ing them fully as he ought; the Author alſo calling often, and in the moſt earneſt manner on his Lordſhip, in behalf of his Dioceſe, to inſtruct them in ſome more proper Anſwer, by giving them *a clearer View of the Evidences, both of the Truth, and the Authority, of the ſacred Writings*——Which his Lordſhip, 'twas conceiv'd, lay under the ſtronger Obligation to do, as he firſt ſtir'd this neceſſary and important Queſtion before Infidels, and undertook to reſolve it in the moſt poſitive Terms; and therefore on failure of ſome ſuch Anſwer, would not only confirm the many *Sceptics* we have among us in their Doubts, but give *Infidels* too, great Occaſion of Triumph.

But ſuch *Requeſt*, ſo proper on the Occaſion, ſo well meant for the Service of the *Catholic Church* in general, as of his Lordſhip's *Dioceſe* in particular—— I ſay, ſuch *Requeſt* was ſo far from being well taken, that, on the contrary, the *Diſſertator* was on all hands appriz'd, his little Tract had given ſo great Offence to his Lordſhip, and a certain *Order of Men*, that ſome of them were determin'd to have him proſecuted by the Civil Magiſtrate—— But the ſame appearing evidently to be no other than a mere *Eſſay*, or innocent *Inquiry* into the Genuineneſs of a ſingle Goſpel only, and that too of long ſuſpected Authority, often queſtioned in the *Chriſtian Church*——And all Hopes of a *State Proſecution* ceaſing by degrees——At length, out comes (among others) a Tract intitled, [*A Vindication of the Goſpel of St. Matthew*] and ſoon after [*A Supplement to the ſaid Vindication*] in the Name indeed of Mr. LEONARD TWELLS, *Vicar of St. Mary's in Marlbrough*; but, as the Author of the *Diſſertation* was credibly inform'd, under the Inſtruction of the *Biſhop of London*, a certain learned Layman, *&c.* juſtifying the original *Apoſtolic Authority*, and aſſerting the *faithful Tranſmiſſion of the ſaid Goſpel againſt the Diſſertator*, with

with infinite Sophiſtry, Miſrepreſentation, and Abuſe.

Whereupon it was judg'd convenient to publiſh a Defence of the ſaid *Diſſertation*, as well to demonſtrate more fully the Grounds honeſt Men, have to ſuſpect the *Divine Authority* of our *firſt Goſpel*, as to detect the falſe Reaſoning and Evaſions of the *Publiſher* of the ſaid *Vindication*—— Againſt whom the *Defender* hath moſt clearly ſhewn——

1. That the *Titles* not only to *Matthew*'s, but to all the other three Goſpels, are to the laſt degree precarious—— That learned Men always have been, and ſtill are, at the utmoſt Uncertainty *who* prefix'd thoſe *Titles*, and *when* they were ſo prefix'd; it not having been the Cuſtom of the *Antients* to prefix *Titles* to their *Works*, and conſequently that the *Titles* we now find prefix'd to the Goſpels, we may be aſſured were placed there, not by the Evangeliſts themſelves, but by ſome later Hand, and therefore can be no Proof that theſe are of their compoſing, whoſe *Names* they reſpectively bear before them, even as Divines confeſs.

2. That with reſpect to our preſent *firſt Goſpel*, commonly aſcrib'd to the Apoſtle *Matthew*, the *Diſſertator* and *Defender* both have evinc'd, from the very beſt and moſt unexceptionable Authorities—— That in the firſt Ages, it went under at leaſt *ten* other different *Names*, beſides that of the ſaid Apoſtle, and was ſo commonly known, underſtood, and made uſe of among *Chriſtians* of different Sects——Some aſcribing it to one Apoſtle, or Diſciple of *Jeſus*, and ſome to another, as Information or Perſuaſion led them; and that ſometimes it took its Name from the *Sect* itſelf, or whole Party of *Chriſtians* that made uſe of it, which muſt certainly happen thro' the general Ignorance of *Chriſtians* in thoſe firſt Ages, concerning the true Author——Whilſt laſtly, others rejected it, as wholly ſpurious; but more particularly

ticularly the *Nazarens*, or firſt *Jewiſh Converts*, for whoſe Sake, 'tis on all hands admitted, the *true Goſpel* was compoſed, and who being the *Depoſitaries* of its Original, were the only proper and ſure Evidence concerning its Authority.

Then with regard to the *Internals* of this *Goſpel*—— The *Defender* hath juſtly obſerv'd, that nothing can be deduced from them, to prove the Apoſtle *Matthew* its Compoſer; tho' the *Antients*, who rejected this Goſpel, drew many Arguments thence, to prove the contrary——As,

1. That the Apoſtle *Matthew* is never mentioned with the ordinary *Note of Diſtinction*, in the *firſt Perſon*, but indiſcriminately among others, in the *third* only.

2. That if either the Apoſtle, full of the Divine Wiſdom, or indeed any vulgar *Jew* of ordinary Underſtanding, had been the Compoſer of it, he would never have appear'd under the Character of a *Publican*, as in this Goſpel; a Species of Men the moſt deteſtable among the *Jews*, for whoſe Sake chiefly the Apoſtle *Matthew* is ſaid to have wrote, who would be ſure never to look on, or give any Credit to a Relation, which came from one ſtigmatiz'd with that *Character*.

3. That if any Perſon divinely inſpired had been the Author, there can be no Reaſon aſſign'd why he ſhould not have acquainted the World with it, and declar'd it in ſo many Words——A Declaration of that ſort being indiſpenſably neceſſary, in a Hiſtory the firſt of the kind, which pretended to bring us the ſtrange Tidings of a *new Diſpenſation* from Heaven; even a *new Religion*, to which all others then in the World, even that of *Nature* itſelf (if occaſion) was to give way.

4. That had the Compoſer of this Goſpel been under the ſpecial Direction of the *Holy Spirit*, we ſhould never have had ſo many *Diſlocations*, *Impro-*

prieties,

prieties, *Diſagreements*, and *Contradictions*, as Divines have pointed out in their Comments on it.

5. That whoever the Author of this Goſpel was, 'tis evident he was ignorant of the true *Genealogy* of *Jeſus*, as he not only varies from, and contradicts the *Genealogies* in the O. T. but that alſo given us by St. *Luke* in the New; ſo that to give any Credit to this Author, we ſhall be oblig'd to ſet aſide both thoſe Authorities, or elſe make the *H. Spirit* vary from, and contradict himſelf.

6. That with reſpect to the *Prophecies* out of the O. T. which the Author of this Goſpel affects frequently to cite, and apply to his own Purpoſes; it is ſufficiently clear, there is ſcarce a ſingle Prophecy that he hath rightly quoted, and afterwards apply'd in a Senſe plain to be underſtood——Nay, he is ſo very fond of *old Prophecies*, that he hath quoted ſome *no where* to be met with in the *Jewiſh Scriptures*; which ſhews farther, even to a Demonſtration, that the Author of this Goſpel was ſome *Greek*, or *Helleniſtical Jew*, little acquainted with thoſe *Scriptures*, and of the ſecond Century, when ('tis known) the Humour of allegorizing, and accommodating the *Scriptures*, in order to give a Stamp of Authority to ſome *Forgeries*, prevail'd in the *Chriſtian Church*.

7. That the Compiler of our *firſt Goſpel* is grievouſly out in his *Chronology*, with reſpect to *Jeſus's Nativity*, which he hath placed in the Reign of *Herod the Great*; whereas LUKE places it in the firſt Year of *Cyrenius*'s Government of SYRIA, or the ſame in which *Archelaus*, *Herod*'s Son and Succeſſor, was baniſh'd, which was not till nine Years after his Father's Demiſe; ſo that if *our Saviour* was born, as the moſt compute from this Goſpel, two or three Years before ſuch Demiſe, then the Author is out in his Computation, at leaſt *eleven*, if not *twelve* Years; which as it was impoſſible for a *Jew* con-

 temporary

temporary with *Jeſus* to have been guilty of, ſo ſuch Miſtake, groſs as it is, might eaſily befal a careleſs inaccurate Author, who wrote upon *Hear-ſay* in another Country, and above a hundred Years after the Fact.

8. That he is more or leſs out in his *Chronology*, in relation to the *Nativity of Jeſus*, is not only prov'd by St. *Luke*, but by the *vulgar Æra* of *Chriſtians*, ſettled and allow'd by the *Catholic Church*, which commences, as all chronological Divines compute, three Years after the Death of *Herod*, if not more.

9. That if the Goſpel we at this Day make uſe of is deriv'd from a *Greek Original*, as not a few modern Divines, and thoſe of the greateſt Name and Authority contend---this will be another Proof, that it is not the ſame Goſpel the Apoſtle *Matthew* compos'd, at the Requeſt, and for the common Uſe of the *Hebrew* Converts; ſince that Goſpel, all Antiquity agrees, was wrote in the *Hebrew Language*, as is indeed moſt likely, the Apoſtle himſelf being an *illiterate Hebrew*, and writing to others of the ſame Nation, as *ignorant and illiterate* as himſelf.

10. That we have no Authority to be depended on, that the *Goſpel in debate* was in being, and known to the World in the firſt Century——That it was near the Concluſion of the ſecond, before it was ever pretended to be cited as *Matthew*'s Goſpel——That at beſt it is but a *Tranſlation*, which at no Time can be a proper Foundation of our *Faith* and *Hope*, much leſs when the *Tranſlator* is not known, and the *Tranſlation* itſelf never examin'd into, or compar'd with the Original.

11. That if according to *Irenæus*, the only Father that fixes any Time for the writing this Goſpel, the ſame was not wrote till after *Peter* and *Paul* came to *Rome*; which Chronologers compute to have happen'd about thirty Years after the Crucifixion, all certain Memory of *Jeſus*'s Precepts and Doctrines muſt

muſt go near to have been extinguiſh'd, or at leaſt the Relation of them be very imperfect, and uncertain: But if *this Goſpel* was not wrote, as ſome ſuſpect, and think they have ſufficient Grounds ſo to do, till after the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, or in the ſecond Century, then 'tis likely it was not wrote by an Apoſtle, or by any Diſciple of an Apoſtle, and conſequently, in neither Caſe, can be a Foundation of *Chriſtian Belief*.

12. In a Word, if *Mark's Goſpel* is divine, *Matthew's* cannot be ſo too, ſince the one is viſibly but a licentious Copy, or Abridgment of the other, whatever learned Men may pertinaciouſly urge the contrary——For 'bating ſome few Differences here and there, ſome *Omiſſions* in one place, and ſome *Interpolations* in another, after the looſe manner of the Antients, if they did but tranſcribe——the *Subſtance* 'tis certain is the very ſame, and for the moſt Part even the *Words* and *Expreſſion*.

13. To conclude, what amounts even to a Demonſtration, or is the ſureſt Proof, at leaſt, the Caſe will at this diſtance of Time admit, that the *Greek Goſpel* we now make uſe of is *apocryphal*, is this—— That two Copies of the *original Hebrew*, diſtinct almoſt in every Line, as Fragments remaining ſhew, from the *Goſpel* we now have, were actually known to have been extant in the Beginning of the fifth Century, both ſeen by *Epiphanius* and *Jerom*, one preſerv'd in the Library of *Cæſarea* in *Paleſtine*, and the other at *Beræa*, a Town in *Syria*; both Copies made uſe of by the *Nazarens*, who were the undoubted Poſterity of thoſe *Chriſtians*, for whoſe Sake, all Antiquity agrees, the Apoſtle compos'd his *Goſpel*, and with whom he left the *Original*——This thoſe *Chriſtians* held among themſelves, as the moſt ſacred Truth, deriv'd from their Anceſtors, *viz.* that *their Goſpel* was the very *Authenticon of Matthew* depoſited with them, and read in their Aſſemblies from his

Time; of the Truth of which, the greater Number of *Chriſtians* at that Time were ſo well convinc'd, and St. *Jerom* with them, that he having obtain'd thoſe *Beræans* Permiſſion, was at the Pains not only to tranſcribe the *Hebrew*, but to render it afterwards into two the moſt learned and extenſive Languages then in the World, even *Greek* and *Latin*, for the Uſe of the *Catholic Church*, and in view, no doubt, to introduce it into the *Canon*; but as this could not be effected during his Life, ſo after his Death, thoſe Renditions were never more heard of, being either ſecreted or deſtroy'd; and thoſe primitive *Chriſtians* deſpoil'd of their *Copies*, to the End ('tis moſt apparent) that our preſent Goſpel ſhould ſtand unrival'd, and that no ſuch ſacred Teſtimony ſhould appear againſt it.

Theſe are the Objections which, among others, naturally ariſe againſt the Genuineneſs of our firſt Goſpel; moſt of them urg'd in the firſt Ages of *Chriſtianity* by *Chriſtians* themſelves, and but barely related in the *Diſſertation* and its *Defence*; and which, if Truth only had been ſought after, and made the Scope of the *Vindicator*'s concerning himſelf in this Controverſy, in the room of the *Biſhop*, might have been anſwer'd to in as few Words, Truth always lying in a very ſhort compaſs, eſpecially with Men of Probity and Erudition.

But our Author having, in vindicating the Authority of a ſingle Book only, ſpun out his Argument into three long Tracts, the laſt containing no fewer than 166 Pages cloſe printed, ſhews either himſelf to be of a contentious Spirit, or elſe that the Point in debate is, in his own Judgment, very hazardous and doubtful, if not totally againſt him; and that he had no other View in a Diſputation ſo verboſe and tedious, than to over-burthen and perplex his Reader, with infinite Matter of no Weight, nor Tendency to the Point in queſtion, in order firſt

to

to obſcure, and blunt the Edge of his Adverſary's Arguments, and next to withdraw his Attention from that Evidence, the Vindicator knew he could neither anſwer nor evade——The Vindicator's chief Aim in this Conteſt being to acquit himſelf to his Superiors, by doing the Duty expected of him, *i. e. per fas & nefas*, to juſtify the *N. T. Canon* in all its Branches, tho' perhaps to the Reproach and Detriment of the reſt of Scripture: This he knew, if he wrote at all, it was incumbent on him to do, even in the beſt manner he was able, at his utmoſt Peril, as he tendered his little Vicarage, or had regard to future Preferment——Such being the ſlaviſh, and much to be lamented, Condition of the *Clergy*, that where *Orthodoxy* comes in the way, they dare not appear in the *Cauſe of Truth*; they are bound down by ſo many *Oaths* and *Subſcriptions*, ſo many ſolemn and repeated Declarations * *not to be broke through*, that as often as *Orthodoxy* and the *Truth* claſh, which is not ſeldom, they muſt remain ſilent; or if they are made to ſpeak, they muſt argue againſt Conviction, or be undone——No *Biſhopric*, no Preferment, no nor Maintenance for himſelf or Family can be had; a *Clergyman* muſt always appear on the Side of reigning *Orthodoxy*, or ſtarve.

And indeed was not this the Caſe——And on the other hand, was not Preferment the Prize in view, the *Vindicator* had never dar'd to fly in the Face of *Truth* ſo often, and in the bold manner he does, in † denying the numerous Forgeries under the Names of *Jeſus Chriſt* and his Apoſtles, which came forth in the *ſecond Century*, quoted by the primitive Fathers, and read in the *Chriſtian Aſſemblies*, as ſacred Scripture: And in the crying up, at every turn, the *Piety*, the *Orthodoxy*, the *Veracity* forſooth, and the *Learning*,

* So Dr. EDWARDS (of *Oxford*) ſee his Doctrine of Original Sin, pag. 114.

† Supplement, pag. 6, 7, 8.

Learning, without Exception of *Eccleſiaſtical Writers* of the firſt Ages——A Man that is audacious enough, to publiſh in the Teeth of the preſent learned Age Untruths ſo notorious, is, one would think, if Holy Church would abet him, qualify'd for the moſt dangerous Undertaking——For what will not that Man dare to do, hungry after Preferment, who with a Sufficiency not to be paralell'd, will dogmatically deny, or affirm in the Face of his Adverſary, whatever comes in his way, which he conceives makes for *Orthodoxy*, how falſe ſoever, *Cor ſolus habet, ſolus & ingenium.*

Nevertheleſs, to do the *Vindicator* Juſtice, as he hath been well ſupply'd with Materials by thoſe who ſet him to work, in defence of the accus'd Goſpel, ſo he hath taken great Pains, to place them in the moſt artful Light: He hath likewiſe, with great Induſtry, conven'd the *Antients* to ſpeak all they poſſibly can in its Behalf, and hath not been wanting, to put the moſt favourable Conſtruction on their Teſtimony——But tho' he makes them agree in this, that the Apoſtle *Matthew*, ſome Time or other, they know not when, compos'd a *Goſpel* in *Hebrew*, for the Uſe of the *Hebrew Nation*; yet not one of them can be brought with any tolerable Evidence to vouch, that the *Gentile* Church was ever poſſeſs'd of it, or that our *Greek Goſpel* is of the ſame Extraction; neither does our Author make it appear, from any his Eccleſiaſtical Writers, that the *Hebrew Chriſtians*, who 'tis allow'd were the *Depoſitaries* of the Apoſtles *Autograph*, that they in any Age, could ever be brought to own our *firſt Goſpel*, or ever made uſe of, or ever had any ſuch *Goſpel* as ours among them, or that they had any other *Goſpel*, than that ſeen with them in St. *Jerom*'s Time, which were his main Points to prove, as will be ſeen hereafter; but which are wholly neglected in his *Vindication*, *Supplement*, and *Reply*; ſo naked and defenceleſs, after all the

Vindica-

Vindicator's Helps, and Labour, is this *poor Goſpel* left to us——Hard Caſe truly, that after ſo long ſtanding, and in the very Front too of our moſt Holy Canon——Very hard, that this *Goſpel*, upon a cloſe Examination, ſhould be found ſo deſtitute of all rational and probable Evidence; and in lieu thereof, ſhould ſtand in need of ſo much united Learning, Labour, and Artifice, to cover its Nakedneſs, and enable it to maintain its Ground; and that too, as it ſeems, but very inſecurely, even in the Opinion of its warmeſt Advocates; for why ſhould they ſollicit the Magiſtrate for *Pains* and *Penalties*, if they were not conſcious here of Impoſture, and conſequently, if free Debate ſhould continue, of their own Inability to conceal it longer.

But it is Time now to conſider, what the *Vindicator* hath offer'd for the Genuineneſs and Divine Authority of our firſt Goſpel, and that briefly, and abſtractedly, from the many trivial Incidents he amuſes his Reader with, and thoſe mean pedantic Reflections upon gramatical Faults, Errors of the Preſs, and Inaccuracy of Expreſſion, with which he buſies himſelf maliciouſly and impertinently, in order to leſſen, and diſcredit the Perſon and Abilities of his Adverſary, and give a Biaſs to the Reader's Judgment, in favour of *Bigotry* and *Superſtition*——And,

1*ſt*, With reſpect to the *Titles* prefix'd to the firſt and the other *Goſpels*, we allow they import, that the ſeveral *Evangeliſts* therein named, were the Penmen of their reſpective *Goſpels:* But then the *Vindicator* does not pretend to determine, in what Period of Time, or by whom thoſe *Titles* were ſo prefix'd, only he calls for two Eccleſiaſtics, *Irenæus* and *Clemens Alex.* to vouch, that our *firſt Goſpel* in their Times, *viz.* towards the Cloſe of the ſecond, and Beginning of the third Century, had the ſame *Title* it now bears; which is ſaying no more, than what

the

the *Diſſertator* and his *Defender* both admit, who ſuppoſe the ſaid *Goſpel* to be an *Impoſture* of the ſecond Age, having the *Title* (among others) it now bears.

2*dly*, To the other Objection, ariſing from the *Externals* of this *Goſpel*, viz. That in the primitive Ages, it went at leaſt under *ten* other different *Names* or *Titles*, than that it at preſent goes by; which Objection alone, if made good, muſt inevitably overthrow the whole Credit of its Apoſtolical Authority—— The *Vindicator* hath nothing pertinently to urge, but on the contrary (p. 31——34. of his *Vindication*) plainly ſhews himſelf entirely ignorant of this Matter, before appriz'd of it by the *Diſſertator*; and therefore was content to reſt it there, from firſt to laſt, upon the Event, that the *Diſſertator* had no *Vouchers* in ſupport of an *Objection* of ſo great Weight.

But the *Defender* ſoon let him know (*Defence*, p. 24——26.) that there were *Vouchers*, and thoſe *ad Hominem* of the very beſt ſort, even *Eccleſiaſtics*, antient and modern, to make good what the *Diſſertator* had barely aſſerted—— And tho' the *Vindicator* made no Exception to any of the urg'd Authorities, except * *two*, and that merely upon account of their being modern; but otherwiſe, of more Learning, Judgment, and Integrity, than any or all the *Fathers*——Yet he will not own his Conviction, but would ſeem to anſwer and conteſt the Point, by alledging (*Reply*, p. 41.) "That the *Defender*, with "all his boaſting, had not been able to make good "Proof, that any Man, or Set of Men, for *near* "an

* CHRISTOPHER SANDIUS, a Divine of the *Low-Countries*, a Man of as much Reading and Knowledge as any, without Exception of the laſt Age, as appears in his *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory*, and other Books of his publiſhing. —— And the Rev. Mr. JEREMY JONES, a Diſſenting Teacher, of great Probity and Erudition, manifeſted in his moſt elaborate, uſeful, and learned Tract *for ſettling the Canon of the N. T. and other Works.*

" an hundred Years after the Goſpels came to Light, " had adjudg'd any of them to other Authors, than " thoſe at preſent contended for"——which every one ſees is no Anſwer but a mere Evaſion——for with reſpect to the Goſpel in Debate, 'tis true, Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory points out no Time when it aſſum'd any Name, no not that of *St. Matthew* itſelf——But what can be more ridiculous than to put us upon proving that this GOSPEL *bore different* NAMES, *or was adjudg'd to other* AUTHORS, in the firſt Age, or ſoon after; when we do not allow its Exiſtence till the ſecond, tho' in what Part of that Age we cannot learn.

'Tis certain *Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory* ſhews it bore all thoſe *Titles* mentioned by the * *Defender*, and that moſt likely from its firſt coming to Light.

For as the *Antients* never prefix'd their *Names* to their *Works*——So any Copy as it fell into the Hands of thoſe who were Strangers to the Author, they immediately appropriated it to ſuch Perſon, as either common Fame, Opinion, or Inclination led them, and this (no Doubt) was the ſole Cauſe, that one Book many Times bore ſeveral *Titles*, naturally and unavoidably, for the ſake of immediate Diſtinction; and not four hundred Years after its Publication, as our Author (*Reply p.* 66) would fain inſinuate—— tho' without any Advantage to his Cauſe for 'tis very poſſible a Book may be found ſpurious, and to have carried a falſe *Title* four or five hundred Years after the Fact.

We proceed now to the *Internals* of our firſt *Goſpel*, and doubt not with the Help of theſe alone, to prove againſt the *Vindicator*, that the ſame is *Apochryphal*, and moſt likely, if not certainly, a *Production* of the ſecond Century.

I am very ſenſible the *Biſhop* and his *Vindicator* both will be averſe to this only ſure Method of

* *Defence* p. 24——26.

Trial, leaning wholly, as they do, upon Church Authority.

For tho' the Biſhop (*third Paſtoral Letter p.* 7.) ſays, *That the ſacred Writings of the N. T. have all of them the Stamp of Divine Authority*——Yet the *Vindicator* p. 69. of his Reply, with the *Biſhop's* good Leave (I ſuppoſe) aſſerts, "That by thoſe "Words the *Biſhop* meant no *internal Evidence* of "ſuch *Authority*, but only the *Character which the* "*Uſe and Eſtimation of Chriſtians have ſtamp'd on* "*them as of Divine Authority*"——in expreſs Contradiction to the *Confeſſions* of all the *reformed Churches* in the World——As e. g. thoſe particularly of *France* in their *Confeſſion* publiſhed 1559, when treating of the Divine Authority of the Scripture, they ſay Art. 4. *We know thoſe Books to be Canonical, not ſo much by the common Accord and Conſent of the Church, as by the Teſtimony and inward Perſuaſion of the Holy Spirit.*

Thus alſo in the fifth Art. of the *Confeſſion* of Faith in the Name of all the *Belgian Churches*, confirm'd by the *Synod of Dort*——*We receive* (ſay they) *thoſe Books only for Holy and Canonical, not ſo much becauſe the Church receives and approves them, as becauſe the Spirit of God doth witneſs in our Hearts that they are of God, and themſelves teſtify their Authority*——To the very ſame Purpoſe the *Confeſſion* of the *Divines at Weſtminſter* chap. 1. Sect. 5. and * *Calvin* in particular, that great Reformer ſays, *That he only whom the H. G. hath perſuaded can repoſe himſelf on the Scripture with true Certainty.* All the † firſt Reformers agreeing in this——That we are to ſeek the Certainty of the Scriptures, not from pretended *Apoſtolical Tradition*, but from the Spirit or inward Conviction of the Mind, ariſing from the Teſtimony they bear of their own Divinity.

But

* Inſt. l. 1. c. 7. S. 4.

† See alſo *Dr, Owen's Diſcourſe concerning the Divine Original of Scripture*. c. 2. Sect. 5. and c. 4, 5.

But *Proteſtants* having ſince the Publication of theſe *Confeſſions*, been pinch'd on this Head, ſee plainly now, that the *Internals* of ſome Books in our preſent *Canon*, would, if try'd by the *Rules of Criticiſm*, very much endanger their D. Authority *they take Shelter therefore under* APOSTOLICAL TRADITION, *and return to* ROMAN MAXIMS *even for Proof of H. Scripture.*

To begin then with the Objections ariſing from the *Internals* of *Matthew's Goſpel*, the firſt whereof is this——

1ſt. Obj.——That the Apoſtle *Matthew* (the ſuppoſed Author) is never mentioned with the ordinary Note of *Diſtinction*, in the firſt Perſon, but indiſcriminately among others in the third only.

Our Author treats this ancient Objection of the *Manichees* (a numerous Party of Chriſtians early in the third Century, famous in Hiſtory for truſting in all *Religious Concerns*, rather to their *Reaſon* than *Church-Authority*) with great Contempt; and becauſe he has been able to find out one profane Author, even *Julius Cæſar*, who in his Commentaries acted the ſame Part, he calls it a mere Cavil, impertinent and what not; and deſires to hear no more of it——but I ask his Pardon, the Caſe between *Cæſar* and (the ſuppoſed) *Matthew* being as different as their Conditions and State of Life were different.

Cæſar gives a modeſt Account of his own Actions done upon the open Stage of the World——*Matthew* on the contrary, himſelf an obſcure Perſon, gives an Account of certain Actions done by another in a Corner, among an obſcure People; famous only for Lying and Impoſture——*Cæſars Hiſtory* carries its own public Atteſtation along with it; not ſo *Matthews Goſpel* to the Heathens, in any one Particular——*Cæſar's* Account is of Facts purely natural; whereas *Matthew's* is of Facts and Events purely ſupernatural——Poſterity was very little if

at all concern'd, whether *Cæſar*'s Relations were true or falſe, whereas Religion is ſo interwoven with every Relation of *Matthew*, that not to give Credit to all he ſays, is (we are told) to expoſe ourſelves to the Anger of Heaven——*Cæſar* pretends not to give the World a *new Law* or *Rule of Faith* by divine Inſpiration, whereas *Matthew* ('tis ſaid) does both——But if it is of the very Eſſence of a *Law*, that Men ſhould be aſſured of the Authority of him that promulgates it, without which they cannot in Juſtice be obliged to obey it——Then the Author of our firſt Goſpel is highly to blame for concealing his own Perſon, and conſequently that Intelligence, and that Authority by which he reports ſo many Wonders, and perſcribes ſo many *new Laws* and *Doctrines* to us.

Laſtly, to illuſtrate the Argument a little more with all the Reverence due to the ſacred Subject—— I would humbly aſk our Author, if it was ever heard of before (the ſuppoſed) *Matthew* related it ——*That God (the ſupreme Being) actually deſcended from Heaven, was incarnate, was born of a Woman, and became a Man——That after he had led a Life here above thirty Years, ſome ſay fifty, in Want and Miſery, doing great Miracles, he at length ſuffered himſelf to be put to Death, and that being actually dead and buried, he reſtored himſelf to life again, and after ſome Time returned into the Heavens from whence he came*——Yet ſuch moſt certainly are the moſt amazing and tranſcendant Events contain'd in our *firſt Goſpel*, and ſhall not the Author himſelf ſtand by, and vouch for the Expediency and Truth of them? ought not the Author, I ſay of ſuch an aſtoniſhing Account of Things, be pointed out to us, even in *Capitals*?——or rather is it fit, that ſuch a Hiſtory, the firſt of the Kind, and of the laſt Importance to be credited, ſhould be uſher'd into the World by an anonymous Hand?

I am

I am almoſt perſuaded our Author full of *Bigotry* and *Prejudice*, will be apt to ſay *Tea*——for truſting to *Apoſtolical Tradition* (*Reply* 71.) *That Matthew delivered this Goſpel to his Countrymen as his own Work*——This alone he thinks was giving ſufficient Notice to the World in all Ages, of its *divine Authority*——for he affirms ibid. "That none "from the Beginning, for fifteen ſucceſſive Centu- "ries, is found to have diſputed *Matthew's* Title, "ſave *Manes* and his Followers only," which by the way is a moſt notorious Blunder of our Author, for not only the *Manichees*, and all thoſe who appropriated to this Goſpel other Titles than that it at preſent bears——but the *Cerdonians* and *Martionites*, who were ſpread all over the Eaſt, and who rejected all the Goſpels we uſe, except Part of *Luke's* only ——All theſe muſt have diſputed *Matthew's* Title to our firſt Goſpel —— And not to mention the whole Body of *Jewiſh Chriſtians* who never owned our Goſpel——'Tis farther very much to be queſtion'd, whether any one of thoſe numerous *Gentile Sects*, which aroſe in the firſt and ſecond Ages, now term'd *Hereticks*, ever receiv'd this Goſpel, ſince Tradition informs us they had other *Goſpels* of their own, to which ('tis likely) they only adher'd.

2d. Obj.——That if either an *Apoſtle* full of the divine Wiſdom, or indeed any ordinary *Jew* had been the Compoſer of our *firſt Goſpel*, he would never have appeared under the Character of a *Publican*, a Species of Men the moſt deteſtable among the *Jews*, for whoſe ſake chiefly, the Author is ſaid to have compiled it, who would be ſure never to look on, or give any Credit to a Relation, which came from one ſtigmatized with that Character.

To this our Author (Vindication p. 39.) gives this careleſs Anſwer, "That *our Lord* freely eat "and converſed with *Publicans*, therefore it had "been ridiculous in a *Diſciple* to have concealed his

"own

" own paſt Relation to that Calling"——and (Reply p. 73.) " That the Suggeſtion would have had " ſome Pertinence, if the *Defender* had proved " that no *Jew*, converted or unconverted, would " have given Credit to an Hiſtorian in *St. Matthew's* Circumſtances."

But let the *Vindicator* prove firſt that the *converted Jews* were reconciled to that Character thro' any Example of our Saviour——I believe not, for tho' we find he once convers'd and eat with Publicans, or perhaps twice in the whole Courſe of his Miniſtry; yet 'tis apparent, he conſidered, and always ſpoke of them in the general, as great Offenders, tho' Objects of his Mercy.

But the only Queſtion ariſing from the Objection is, whether an Hiſtorian ſhould, in Point of Prudence, ſcandalize and Diſhonour himſelf, and conſequently contribute to render void his own Teſtimony——for as to *convert Jews*, they, 'tis likely had their *Prejudices* remaining, as we know all the *Apoſtles* had, and the *unconverted* were to be gain'd over to, and not frightn'd from Chriſtianity, by laying ſtumbling-Blocks in their Way.

Our Author admits " a *Jewiſh Publican* lay un- " der ſome Incapacities in his own Country, with " reſpect to *publick Teſtimony* (p. 73. ibid.) but that " after *Matthew* had abandon'd that *Calling* he had " no Degree of Credit, this (he thinks) does not " appear." But I think 'tis more than probable ſo it was, and that this Sort of Men carried the Scandal and Imputation of their paſt Profeſſion to the Grave.

Neither will the *Vindicator* eaſily prove what he takes for granted, that *Matthew* declined the Buſineſs and Profeſſion of a *Publican* after his Call to the Apoſtolate,——for tho' he was obedient to the Call of Jeſus, and left his Seat for a Time, yet it does not appear he abandon'd it altogether——'Tis certain

certain he is mention'd in the * Text as being then a *Publican*, and we read that ſome of the other *Apoſtles* followed their reſpective *Callings* after *Jeſus's* Deceaſe, and for ought we know all their Lives.

What the *Vindicator* adds further is mere *Rant* and *Enthuſiaſm*, for yeilding the Argument he ſays (Vindication p. 39.) "That the Mention of *Mat-*
"*thew the Publican* in this Goſpel, has been thought
"a good internal Argument, that 'tis rightly aſ-
"ſcribed to him, it being obſervable that the *ſa-*
"*cred Writers* are generally moſt free with the
"Mention of their own Failings"——Why ſo? becauſe (he imagines) "Means were uſed in the
"firſt Recommendation of Chriſtianity, that were
"contrary to human Policy, *God* apparently choo-
"ſing the fooliſh Things of this World, to con-
"found the Wiſe (Reply p. 73.)" which is, as if our Author (blaſted with Superſtition) had ſaid, That *God* to the End to recommend *Chriſtianity* thought fit to invert the unalterable Nature and Reaſon of Things (that is) turn *Wiſdom* into *Folly*, or in other Words, make *fooliſh Things* do the Office of *wiſe Things*, and again, *wiſe Things* that of *fooliſh*, which I confeſs is ſuch a Recommendation of a *new Religion*, as a ſober Man would never think of, and ſhould never give ear to under leſs Authority than that of *St. Paul* and our Author.

3d. Obj.——That if any Perſon divinely inſpired had been the Author of our *firſt Goſpel*, there can be no Reaſon aſſigned, why he ſhould not have acquainted the World with it, and declared it in ſo many Words——A Declaration of this Sort, being indiſpenſably neceſſary in a Hiſtory, which pretended to bring us the firſt Tidings of a *new Diſpenſation* from *Heaven*, even a *new Religion*, to which all others then in the World, even that of *Nature* itſelf (if occaſion) was to give Place.

To

* *Matthew* 10. 3.

To this Objection the *Vindicator* after his Manner boldly aſſerts (Vindication p. 41.---43.) "That "every Circumſtance neceſſary to beget a rational "Faith in us who live at this Diſtance of Time, "is ſupplied by *conſtant* and *uniform Tradition*—— "we know (ſays he) on good and ſufficient Grounds "who wrote the *Goſpel* of *St. Matthew*, and that "ſingle Circumſtance, leaves us no Room to doubt "of his being naturally, and ſupernaturally enabled "to tranſmit the Hiſtory of our Lord to Poſterity "with Accuracy ſufficient to ſatisfy every reaſona-"ble Man——"and more to the like Effect.

The Vindicator ſays, *That every Circumſtance neceſſary to beget in us a rational Faith is ſupplied by conſtant and uniform Tradition*, which he would inſinuate, makes intirely for the Apoſtle *Matthew's* being the Author of our firſt Goſpel——The very contrary of which is moſt true——For I have ſhewn that *Church-Tradition* concerning it, is neither *conſtant* nor *uniform*——Not *conſtant*, becauſe great Numbers of *primitive Chriſtians* never own'd *Matthew's* Title to this Goſpel—— Nor *uniform*, becauſe *Chriſtians* were in nothing more divided, than in Relation to its true Compoſer, as is evident by the ſeveral Titles it bore in the primitive Church.

If therefore all *Tradition* concerning the Author is uncertain, as we can have *no good Grounds to conclude* who he was——So neither *that he was naturally and ſupernaturally enabled to tranſmit the Hiſtory of our Lord with ſufficient Accuracy to Poſterity*——We have no Reaſon to believe he was an *Apoſtle*, and if he was one, he is greatly to blame he did not give ſome notable Proof of it, that might have been tranſmitted with the Goſpel itſelf.

There can be nothing more abſurd, or which carries with it a heavier Cenſure on the Conduct of the *ſupreme Being*, than to imagine, that he ſhould ſuffer *inſpired Writings* to come among us; expect we

ſhould

ſhould believe in them, under the ſevereſt Penalties in an *After-State*, and yet never diſcover to us, in a Manner ſuitable to our rational Natures that they are indeed *inſpired*, or even compoſed by honeſt Men ——tho' for my Part I ſhould be glad to learn, if there is any way poſſible whereby a Man can be aſſured, a Book is wrote by Inſpiration, other than by a new Revelation to the Man himſelf——But becauſe the Vindicator and his Patron both inſiſt ſo much, and ſo often upon *conſtant* and *uniform Tradition*——I beg leave to digreſs a little upon the Subject——1ſt. of *Tradition* in reſpect to *Doctrines*, and 2dly. in reſpect to *inſpired Scripture*——And

1ſt. all learned Men know and lament, that with reſpect to the Affairs of *Chriſtianity* in the * two firſt Ages at leaſt, we are very much in the dark, having no *Tradition* concerning any one *Point* or *Fact* to be depended on, except what we find in the N. T.—— which great Misfortune to our Times, is but the natural Conſequence of the Poverty, the Illiterature, and groſs Ignorance of all the *primitive Chriſtians*, who being of the meaneſt of the People, deem'd all acquir'd Knowledge vain, ſuperficial, and (as they were taught to believe) inconſiſtent with the Profeſſion of *Chriſtianity*; and therefore they not only neglected all Improvements of the Mind, but deſpiſed them altogether——So that in this dark, unſettled, and diſorderly State of Things, it was impoſſible any regular *Syſtem* of *Doctrines* ſhould be tranſmitted to Poſterity, of which we have abundant Teſtimony——For ſo late as in the ſecond and third Ages, there was not ſo much as any one regulated and eſtabliſhed Form of Faith, which was the firſt Thing to be provided for.

* EUSEBIUS the firſt Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtorian we have, complains he had no Foot-Steps of any Hiſtory before him *Proem.* to *E. H.* —— and DAILLE hath a whole Chapter to prove, that even in the three firſt Ages we have very little extant of the ancient Fathers——And that thoſe we have, are miſerably corrupted and abuſed—— *Uſu Patrum Lib.* 1. *c.* 1.

Then (as a learned Author * obſerves) " The ve-
" ry Books of the N. T. give us a Hiſtory of ſe-
" veral *Changes* or *Gradations* of *Doctrines*, ſuited
" to new *Circumſtances*, and to continued new *Re-*
" *velations*, made in a very ſhort Compaſs of Time."
What Gradations and Additions have been ſince continually making in the *Doctrines* of *Chriſtianity*, are known to all who are converſant in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, which prove beyond Contradiction, the *Variableneſs* and *Uncertainty* of all *Traditions* in Matters of (revealed) Religion, notwithſtanding Men's conſtant Pretences to *Antiquity* and *Univerſality*.

2d.——As there were many Changes in *Doctrines*, ſo in Conſequence there muſt needs be, and Hiſtory aſſures us there actually were, many *Schiſms* and *Diviſions*, even in the Time of *Jeſus Chriſt* and his *Apoſtles*, which *Diviſions* in proceſs of Time, reſolved into ſo many oppoſite Sects, many of which had their different Scriptures, which Diverſity as it could ariſe from no other poſſible Source, than the different *Principles* and *Traditions* thoſe Sects had imbibed, and were ſeverally addicted to; ſo alſo it proves even to a Demonſtration, that there can be no *conſtant* and *uniform Tradition* among *Chriſtians* from the Begining, concerning *inſpired Scripture*.

To conclude, no *Tradition* how *conſtant* and *uniform* ſoever, can (ſtrictly ſpeaking) be an adequate Proof to us of the *Inſpiration* of any Book, it being impoſſible in the Nature of Things, that Matters purely ſpeculative and divine, ſhould be ſo aſcertain'd, or that we ſhould come at a *natural* Knowledge of Things *ſupernatural*.

If a Perſon, for Inſtance, ſhould feel himſelf *inſpired*, and tell me that he is ſo, what is *immediate Inſpiration* in him, would be *Tradition* only to me, and I ſhould be at Liberty to believe him or not ——But if it be a Query whether a Perſon *inſpired* can

* In Scheme of literal Prophecy *p.* 73.

can be himſelf always aſſured that he is ſo?——What Credit is due to thoſe who tell us of a *certain Writer*'s having been *inſpired* above a thouſand Years ago, without the leaſt Pretence or Trace of it in his own Writings?——So far therefore as we give Ear to a *Tradition* of that Kind, we truſt to *Men*, not to *God*, we truſt to *fallible Things*, to verify *infallible* ——which is abſurd.

Thus in few Words I have gone to the Root of all pretended *Apoſtolical Tradition*, and have demonſtrated the Mutability and Deceit of it——firſt with regard to Doctrines, and next to Books——And therefore it was that *our Saviour* condemn'd all *Traditions*, and our firſt *Reformers* after his Example renounced them——tho' ſtrenuouſly avowed by the *Biſhop*, and applied to by the *Vindicator* in all his Straits in this Controverſy.

But whereas further it is a frequent *Reaſoning* among *Divines*, whom the *Biſhop* and his *Vindicator* copy—— "That the Truth of the Goſpel Hiſtory "ſtands on the ſame Bottom with that of every o-"ther antient Hiſtory now extant"——Tho' we have all the Reaſon in the World to expect it ſhould ſtand on a much better, as being of a much nearer Concern to us, and becauſe too as * ſome think whatever has any Relation to *Religion*, is more particularly liable to Suſpicion——Yet ſuch *Reaſoning* will hold good ſo far only, and no farther than where the Facts and Events related in either Hiſtory are equally credible, or had there been no other *Goſpels* beſides thoſe we now have, ever publiſhed to the World——Or had we any *Criterion* left, by which to diſtinguiſh the *true Goſpels* from the *Counterfeit* ——Or had not the *Goſpels* we now uſe, been all of them in their Turn, actually rejected by many of the *primitive Chriſtians*, who ſubſtituted other *Goſ-*

* Maximè habenda ſunt pro Suſpectis, quæ quomodo cunq; dependent a Religione——Bacon *nov. Org. l.* 2. *Aph.* 29.

pels in their Room——Or laſtly, were not our preſent *Goſpels* known to have ſuffered in Length of Time, thro' the Zeal and Paſſion of Parties, more than any one profane * Hiſtory (*cæteris paribus*) we are acquainted with——Not to mention the Obſcurity of the ſuppoſed Authors, and their confeſſed utter Incapacity without Miracle to convey common Hiſtory to the World.

Beſides as a learned and worthy Divine lately very well obſerves—— " ſuch Reaſoning had been then " only juſt, were the *Goſpels* acknowledged to be " of the ſame *Claſs* and *Species* with other *Hiſtories* " (*viz.* a Narration of Facts by credible Perſons " who knew them to be true, and related what they " knew of them)——But 'tis of very little Force, " if they muſt needs be received as univerſally in- " ſpired by *God*; for in this View they have no " Relation to other *Hiſtories*, they ſtand on a quite " different Bottom, and their Credit may be diſpu- " ted without hurting common Faith or common " Hiſtory."

4th. Obj.——That had the Compoſer of this firſt Goſpel been under the ſpecial Direction of the H. G. we ſhould never have had ſo many *Diſlocations*, *Improprieties*, *Diſagreements*, and *Contradictions*, as Divines have pointed out in their Comments on it.

To which the *Vindicator* applies this trifling Anſwer, (*Vind.* p. 43.). " That no Divines, learned or " pious, ever pretended to point out *real Contra-* " *dictions* and *Diſagreements*, as is evident from their " Endeavours to reconcile every Appearance of that " kind; *Diſlocations* indeed, and *Improprieties* of " Speech, are allow'd by *Harmoniſts* and *Commen-* " *tators* in this *Goſpel*; but there is no occaſion to " charge them on the *Holy Ghoſt*, it being *generally* " *ſuppos'd*, that the *bleſſed Spirit* left *Method* and " *Diction* entirely to the *Prudence* of the *ſacred Wri-* " *ters*,

* See the Preface to Mr. GREGORY of *Chriſt Church Oxon*, his Poſthumious Works—WHITBY's *Exam. var. Lect. Millii p.* 3, 4.

" *iers*, only preſerving them from all *Error*." —— But being ask'd by the *Defender*, why (in his Opinion) the *H. Ghoſt* did not take care to preſerve the *ſacred Writers* from all *Appearances of Error*, which in effect (to the Vulgar) are *real Error?* and why they were not inſtructed alſo, as to *Order of Time*, and *Propriety of Speech*, ſo eſſential to good Hiſtory? ——His Reaſons are (*Reply*, p. 82.) " Becauſe all " *Appearances of Error* are removable by humane " Wit and Learning."—— And as to *Order of Time*, and *Propriety of Speech*, he confidently (after his manner) affirms, " That neither of theſe are " eſſential to *true* Hiſtory, no, nor *good* Hiſto- " ry; unleſs we ſhall ſay, there is no ſuch Thing " in the World as *good* Hiſtory; inſtancing in " thoſe of *Thucydides*, *Polybius* and *Livy*, which " are not free from ſuch Imperfections." —— Whereas theſe are but Humane Compoſures, which can never be expected to be ſo accurate as Divine, nor is there the like Occaſion; and yet I will venture to ſay, that not one of thoſe *Hiſtorians* are faulty to any degree, in compariſon with the Author in debate, who is ſo often, and ſo groſly miſtaken in Point of Time, and conſequently in Point of Truth, and whoſe Narrations of Facts and Things are ſo complicated with ſeeming *Contradictions* and *Diſagreements*, and withal ſo tranſpoſed and diſordered, that it hath put the Invention of *Eccleſiaſticks* upon the Rack to find out what might be the probable Occaſions of ſo great Confuſion, and being able to account for them no other Way, they have conjectured—— * *Firſt that the Holy Ghoſt was pleaſed the Evangeliſts ſhould ſometimes relate* SEEMING CONTRADICTIONS, *as well for the perplexing the Ungodly, as for the Exerciſe of the Pious.* And—— 2dly with reſpect to the *Diſlocations* and *Confuſion of Facts* in this Goſpel, the ingenious *Mr. Whiſton* accounts for them after this Manner——He takes

* Spanh. Dub. Evan. *Tom.* 3. *Dub.* 69.

it

it for granted * *That the ſeveral Parts or Periods of St. Matthew's Goſpel were written at firſt ſeparately, and upon ſeveral diſtinct Papers, which Papers were put together in their preſent Order, by thoſe who did not perfectly know the true Series of the Hiſtory*——Happy Expedients both theſe I confeſs, if all but *Bigots* and *Enthuſiaſts* would acquieſce in them.

5th. Obj.——That whoever the Author of this Goſpel was——'Tis evident he was ignorant of the true *Genealogy* of *Jeſus*, for ſo his Hiſtory betrays him to have been, wherein he not only varies from, and contradicts the *Genealogies* in the O. T.——but that alſo given us by *St. Luke* in the *New*——So that to give any Credit to his Relation, we ſhall be obliged to ſet aſide both thoſe Authorities, or elſe make the *Holy Ghoſt* differ from, and contradict himſelf.

In anſwer—— the *Vindicator* admits (Vindication *p.* 45.) there are ſeveral *Differences* and *Diſagreements* tho' not *Contradictions* between *Matthew* and *Luke* in ſetting down this *Genealogy*, and has offered ſome conciliatory Schemes, by which to ſoften and contract thoſe *Differences*——which becauſe the *Defender* took no Notice of, the *Vindicator* immoderately teſty, falls to abuſing the *Defender* (Reply *p.* 84.) ——But the *Defender* as he look'd upon the *Vindicator's* Schemes, or Expedients rather to help out the H. G. as not ſufficiently authoriſed; ſo he likewiſe conſidered that all the *Diſſertator* had contended for, was granted.

For whereas our Author ſays (Vindication *p.* 48) "It has however been confeſſed, that there are "ſome *Diſagreements* between the two Accounts" (*viz.* that of *Matthew* and the O. T.) and again "that it cannot be denied, that there is a vaſt Di-"verſity between the *Genealogy* of *St. Matthew* and "that of *St Luke*" and further (*p.* 49, 50) "that "from

* Chron. and Harm. *p.* 108.——110.

" from *David* downwards the two *Evangeliſts* do " ſcarce agree in any Names, ſave thoſe of *Salathiel* " and *Zorobabel*"—— I ſay the *Vindicator* having granted thus much, the *Defender* conceived he had thereby actually given up the whole Point in Controverſy——For as the different and diſagreeing Relations of *Matthew* and *Luke*, ſo far as the *Vindicator* admits, cannot both of them be true, ſo conſequently the H. G. could not be the Dictator of one of them, let our Author chuſe which he will.

It muſt be confeſſed the *Vindicator* hath taken great Pains to palliate *Matthew's* foul Miſtakes in this *Genealogy*, and reconcile him to *Luke*——nevertheleſs it ſo happens he hath let ſlip the greateſt Blunder of all, either wilfully or by another of his own, which is this—— *viz.*——That whereas the ſuppoſed *Matthew* makes *Jeſus* to be of the Line of *David*, as deſcended from *Joſeph*——He in the very ſame Breath ſtupidly forgetting himſelf,—— denies in Fact *Jeſus* was ſo deſcended, but on the contrary, (ſpeaking of his Conception) ſays—— *His Mother Mary was found with Child of him by the H. G. before ever ſhe and* JOSEPH *came together*, or had carnal Knowledge of each other—— which *ſeems* to be one of our Author's *ſeeming* Contradictions, and which may require ſome of his Sophiſtry and Confidence *ſeemingly* to reconcile——As to the reſt,

The Diſpute upon this Objection turns wholly upon *Quibble*, or a Play of Words e. g. where *Matthew* writes that *Jeſus* deſcended from [A] and *Luke* on the contrary, aſſerts he deſcended from [B] the *Diſſentator* happened to ſay, *Luke* in that Inſtance, contradicts *Matthew*——No, inſiſts the *Vindicator*, he only diſſagrees with him——*And this is the Method this Man takes to aſſert Revelation, and convince Deiſts.*

6th Obj.——That with reſpect to the *Prophecies* taken out of the O. T. which the Author of this

this *Goſpel* affects frequently to cite, and apply to his own Purpoſes——it is ſufficiently clear there is ſcarce a ſingle *Prophecy* that he hath rightly quoted, and afterwards applied as he ought, in a Senſe plain to be underſtood.

The *Vindicator* in his firſt ſetting out to anſwer this Objection (*p.* 51) defies his Adverſary to produce a ſingle Inſtance, wherein *St. Matthew* cites a *Prophecy* ſo erroneouſly as to change the Senſe—— But is not *Mat.* 2. 6. to look no * farther a groſs Inſtance of this ſame erroneous citing? And can any Thing be more partial and inſincere than our Author's Anſwer thereto? (*ibid. viz.*) "That the "Words are not *Matthew's*, but thoſe of the "*High Prieſts* and *Scribes*" As if theſe, the whole † College of them ſhall not be preſum'd to know their own Scriptures better than the ſuppoſed *Matthew*, and conſequently to have cited them truly, but that the latter hath ignorantly or careleſly miſreported them.

In his Reply (*p.* 88) The *Vindicator* affirms again That *Matthews* Citations are never ſo very faulty "but that they are always *reconcileable* to the Places "in the O. T. from whence they are taken, in *Senſe* "and in above a hundred Inſtances are every way "the ſame"——But is not the admitting this Writer's Citations to be barely *reconcileable* only in Senſe to the Places cited—— And again, to be in ſome Inſtances only, and not in all the ſame with them—— I ſay is not this plainly giving up the Queſtion, and allowing the Writer not to be ſo clear and accurate in this Matter as he ought——to be guilty at leaſt of ſome imperfect Quotations——and conſequently not to have been influenced by the H. G?

Beſides

* See more Inſtances of falſe citing in *Matthew*, in the Diſcourſe of Grounds and Reaſons &c. *Part* 1. *c.* 8.

† See *Mat.* 2. 4.

Beſides that 'tis notorious, he refers to * one Prophecy no where to be met with——to † others which have no Relation to his Subject——Others again, he quotes as Prophecies, which appear to be mere ‖ Diction, or proverbial Speech——And once in quoting a Prophecy he blunders, and miſtakes his Author, ** referring to one Prophet inſtead of another, with whom too the Words are but very imperfectly found. ——And ſtill the Vindicator is Bigot enough to inſiſt, that the Writer was inſpired, and without Error.

The Truth ſeems to be this——Either the Writer took his Texts out of the O. T. upon Credit from others——or elſe he cited them *memoriter* (careleſly) as the Antients were wont to do——and from hence, no doubt, it is the many Miſtakes in this Goſpel aroſe——which proves, firſt that the Author was under no Direction of the H. G.——and next, that his Writings could never be deſigned for a Rule of Men's Faith and Manners.——Then,

2dly——with reſpect to the *Propriety* of his Applications of Prophecies——The Vindicator (*p.* 54) having aſſerted—— "That the *Prophets* of the O. "T. were not the Authors of, or did not underſtand "their own Predictions, but the H. G. for them" ——he infers thence—— "That no one can be a "Judge, our *Evangeliſt* hath warp'd his cited "Prophecies to a Senſe altogether foreign to the "H. G. true Meaning (as charged by the Diſſertator) unleſs he can be ſure the H. G. had but one "Intendment in thoſe Prophecies, which he cannot "be ſatisfied in without *Inſpiration*——'till therefore the Unbelievers are abſurd enough to lay "claim to *Inſpiration*, they can have no certain "Grounds for charging *Matthew* with Miſſapplications——all they can pretend is, that ſome

"*Pre-*

* *Mat.* 2. 23.
† *Ibid.* 1. 22, 23. 2. 15. *&c.*
‖ *Ibid.* 2. 15. 4. 15. 13. 14. *&c.*
** *Ibid.* 27. 9.

" *Predictions* in his Goſpel are ſaid to be verified in " *Jeſus*, which without Revelation could not ſurely be affirmed" —— All which is founded merely upon *Petitio Principii*, or a taking that for granted which is the only Thing he had to prove—— Our Author firſt concludes (his ſuppoſed) *Matthew* wrote by Inſpiration, and then infers he was capable of putting ſuch a Senſe on Prophecies as none but thoſe inſpired like himſelf ſhould find out.

And this our Author calls vindicating St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel with reſpect to Prophecies therein quoted and applied, but which in Truth expoſes the Goſpel finally to ridicule, and puts an End to all Prophecy.

For to what Purpoſe is that *Prophecy* given, which is conceived in Terms ſo covered and ænigmatical, that a Man muſt neceſſarily be inſpired to find out the true Meaning, or its Relation to the Event—— Neither are we ſure tho' a Man had common Inſpiration that he would be able to unfold any of the *Prophecies* in the O. T. ſince the *Prophets* who delivered them could not —— They (it ſeems) did not know the Meaning of their own Words, nor could determine about the Events themſelves predicted——which in few Words is to make the Prophets in their Time as uſeleſs, as are their Propheſies in this, and both of them greater Cheats than were the Oracles of the ancient Heathens.

'Tis impoſſible therefore to give too hard a Name to the *Hypotheſis of double Senſes*, contended for by our Author——as it is moſt unworthy a wiſe and good Being, equivocal, a ſtanding Reproach to revealed Religion, which turns it into Ridicule, and gives its Enemies a more plauſible Exception to it, than the little or no Connection they find between the cited *Prophecies* literally taken, and the *Events* pretended to be predicted by them—— and if there ſhall be a Neceſſity to grant that the Author of the

the Goſpel in Debate hath in applying *Propheſies*, been guilty of departing ſo far from the *Letter*, as to make it impoſſible he ſhould be underſtood in any other than a *ſecundary*, *ſublime*, *allegorical* or feigned Senſe—— there is no Excuſe for him, we muſt give him up for an Impoſtor, and reſolve to be concerned no more with him.

For the twelve *Apoſtles* and their immediate *Diſciples*, to the laſt Degree, ſimple and illiterate, were utterly incapable of the *ſublime* Theology, or the Art of *allegorizing* or refining upon Scripture; this vile Abuſe of it (they ſay) began in ſome Meaſure with *Paul*——but 'tis certain it was in that Vogue in the ſecond and third *Ages*, that the whole Subſtance of our *new Religion* was endangered by it, and upon the Point of being exhauſted into Type and Figure.

Before I conclude on this Head——I would obſerve one *Hypotheſis* more of our Author, which for the Singularity of it deſerves mention——He ſuppoſes, "That Paſſages are applied to *Jeſus* by the "ſacred Writers, not upon the Principles of *Cri*"*ticiſm*, nor of *myſtical Theology*, but upon the "mere Strength of their *inſpired Characters*" ſo that if a Man can but once obtain the *Character* of being inſpired, we muſt thenceforth abandon our Reaſon, and yeild up our Underſtandings to his *Deliriums*, which is ſuch a Manifeſtation of Bigotry and Enthuſiaſm in our Author, as a Man ſhall rarely meet with——But the Truth is, the *Apoſtles* had none of them that *Character* either among their Diſciples or one another, as is obvious in many Places in the N. T.——Neither does the ſuppoſed *Matthew* in particular any where pretend to it, and if not, it cannot be our Duty to regard him as inveſted with it—— *For he that believes what God ſaith, without Evidence that he ſaith it, does not believe God.*

7th Obj.——relates to the Miſtake charged on the Author in Point of *Chronology*——with regard to our Saviour's Nativity——which Charge tho' the *Vindicator* always partial, will not admit to be juſt, yet he confeſſes (*Vindication p.* 62) *that it hath been a Difficulty with the Learned long ago*——And indeed ſuch a *Difficulty* it is, that tho' many Attempts have been made, and much Pains taken, yet none have been able to ſolve it, ſo as to make *Matthew* and *Luke* agree, or even to leſſen the Difference between them.

The *Vindicator* alleges —— that the *Apographè* mention'd in St. *Luke*, was not only a *Tax*, but a *Cenſus*, or *Inrolment* of Families, which at the Command of *Auguſtus* might be made in the Life-Time of *Herod* the Great, as well as after *Judæa* became a Roman (Government) Province; and he refers us (*Vind. p.* 62) to what *Grotius* and *Hammond* have ſaid on this Head——But what could theſe know more than what *Luke* and *Joſephus* inform us—— * *Luke* ſays——*That the taxing* (or if the *Vindicator* had rather the *Inrolment* or *Cenſus*) *was firſt made when* CYRENIUS was Governor of *Syria*—— and † *Joſephus* ſays —— *That* CYRENIUS *came into* JUDÆA (*then annexed to* SYRIA) *both to aſſeſs their Eſtates and to ſeize* ARCHELAUS's *Effects and Treaſure*——So that according to *Joſephus*——*Cyrenius* did not come into *Judæa*, and conſequently did not make the particular *Inrolment* or *Cenſus* mentioned by *Luke*, as attending our Saviour's Birth, till after the Baniſhment of *Archelaus Herod*'s Son and Succeſſor, who 'tis computed reigned nine Years after him. ——Not but the *Vindicator*'s Inſinuation that this ſame *Inrolment* might be made in the Life-Time of *Herod* the Great, is in other reſpects moſt faulty——for whilſt *Herod* was living, as the Defender juſtly

* *Chap. 2. ver. 2.*
† *Antiq. 18. c. 1.*

juſtly obſerved, the Governour of *Syria* could have no Authority to take a Survey of *Judæa*, part of *Herod*'s Dominions: it being abſurd to imagine, the *Romans* ever medled in Affairs of that tender Nature, where Kings their Allies (tho' under their Appointment) had the ſole Rule and Power.

To conclude on this Head —— The Vindicator is forced to confeſs (Reply p. 90.) "Divines do allow, "as St. *Luke* is now read, that St. *Matthew* is "guilty of a notorious *Anachroniſm*, tho' (adds he) "they give up no Point herein, but only an im-"proper *Engliſh Tranſlation*, and thereby they "(happily) bring off St. *Matthew* from the "Charge."——And 'tis well if he eſcapes ſo.

8*th. Obj.* has a farther Relation to the *Miſtake*, with Reſpect to the *Nativity of Jeſus*, as it ſtands not only prov'd by St. *Luke*, but as the *Æra* of it has been long ſettled, and allow'd by the *Catholic Church*.

The *Vindicator* is pleaſed to be merry with, and to turn this Objection off with Ridicule; but as he allows there is a great *Difficulty* in the former, of which this is a Branch; ſo ſome perhaps may ſee, there is the *like* in this: And further, that the *Vulgar Æra*, of the Birth of *Chriſt*, which has been the only Meaſure and Standard of the Accounts of Time over Chriſtendome, and which begins above three Years after the Death of *Herod*, is a tacit Allowance of all *Chriſtians*, of this Author's foul *Miſtake* in Point of Time, and conſequently, that he was neither an *Apoſtle* nor an *inſpir'd Writer* —— And, further alſo, that what he relates in his 2*d* Chapter, touching the *Three Wiſe Men, the Star, and Slaughter of the Infants*, are ſo many *Fictions*, ſpun out of his own *Brain*: For if *King Herod* was not then in Being, none of thoſe Tranſactions in which he is made a Party, could in Reality happen.

9*th.*

9*th*. *Obj*. is this—— That according to all Eccleſiaſtical Antiquity, the *Autograph* of *Matthew*'s *Goſpel* was in *Hebrew*, which too both the *Reaſon*, and *Neceſſity* of the Thing, confirm.—— For if the Apoſtle Himſelf, by the Conſent of all, was a *rude and illiterate Hebrew*, and if he wrote to, and for the Uſe of *Hebrews*, as *rude* and *illiterate* as Himſelf, then he muſt have been conſtrain'd to write in the *Hebrew Tongue*, there cannot be the leaſt Doubt of, or Poſſibility of avoiding it.

But now ſome *Modern Divines* of great Note, are of Opinion, and have given their * Reaſons for it, that the *Original* of the Goſpel we now uſe, was certainly *Greek*; and they are the more clear in This, as there is Nothing more eaſy, than for Men skill'd in *Languages*, and accuſtom'd to their *peculiar Idioms*, to diſtinguiſh between a *Tranſcript* and a *Tranſlation*.---To which Our Author makes this prevaricating and moſt ſhameful Anſwer. (*Vind*. *p*. 74, 75.)

"The Fathers, whether right or wrong, "with Reſpect to the *Original Language*, are "nevertheleſs unanimous, that their preſum'd "*Greek Verſion*, contain'd the ſame Doctrines and "Facts with St. *Matthew*'s *Hebrew*; and if ſo, "his Goſpel is faithfully tranſmitted to Us, be "it a *Verſion* or be it a *Copy*, at all Adventures "we have the Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, in *Senſe* "and *Subſtance* the ſame as he deliver'd it.—— "We have the *Evidence* of all *Antiquity* —— No "One *Catholic Chriſtian* ever doubted, but that his "Copy was in the Main genuine." And thus he goes on enthuſiaſtically, without offering a ſingle Reaſon, in Support of ſo many and ſuch bold Preſumptions, and without ſhewing upon what Grounds, his *Fathers* and *Catholic Chriſtians* went, and were ſo perſwaded,—— Strangers as they all were to Critics,

* See JONES's *Vindication of the Goſpel of St*. Matthew *againſt* WHISTON.

Critics, and credulous to the laſt Degree of Folly and Madneſs.—— "Nay, (adds he) the *earlieſt He-* "*retics* never ſeem'd to have denied, that any of "the Goſpels, were the works of thoſe whoſe "Names are prefixed to them." But if ſo, why were they not received by them? Why did the *Marcionites* for Example reject not only *Matthew*'s, but *Mark*'s and St. *John*'s Goſpels, together with great Part of *Luke*'s alſo? And why in particular, did the *Manichees* ſet at naught every one of *Our Goſpels?* * *affirming them to be ſpurious, as neither wrote by* Jeſus *nor his* Apoſtles, *but pick'd up from Stories and flying Reports of Vagabond* Jews? But laſtly, why does our Author continue to prevaricate and impoſe on his Reader in Facts ſo notorious? eſpecially when the Point lies otherwiſe in ſo very narrow a Compaſs? —— *Matthew* wrote in *Hebrew*, the Expediency as well as the Neceſſity of the Thing evince it; He wrote it at the Requeſt of the *Hebrews*, and 'twas abſolutely neceſſary the *Hebrew* Nation, whoſe were the *Law* and the *Prophets*, and from whom *Our Saviour* himſelf and his *Apoſtles* ſprung, that they ſhould have at leaſt One Goſpel in their Favour; and that they had ſo, all *Tradition* agrees.—— But the *Goſpel* we have is of *Greek Original*, therefore if any Truſt is due to *Tradition*, it cannot be the ſame with *Matthew*'s; the Concluſion is firm and unavoidable.

Our Author may poſſibly hope to evade it, by dinning in our Ears, *The Fathers, the Fathers made Uſe of the right Goſpel*, which is now come to us; but who will regard the *Fathers* in Oppoſition to the moſt apparent Evidence and Reaſon.—— The *Fathers* were no Critics, therefore were eaſily impos'd on.——They were all *Heretics*, therefore were capable of eſpouſing falſe Goſpels, as they actually did ſome; they were all fierce Party-men, having private

* *Auguſt. contr. Fauſt. l.* 33. *c.* 3.

private Views to ſerve, therefore are not to be hearkned to on Points, where they muſt needs be partial, if indeed they have ever ſaid any Thing on this Subject.—— But I do not remember, that any of them ever attempted to juſtify in any form'd Diſcourſe ſupported by Evidence, their own Goſpels, in Oppoſition to thoſe canoniz'd by other Chriſtians called Heretics, tho' the Intereſt of true Religion very much requir'd it, and tho' thoſe *Fathers* muſt often have Occaſion, and meet with Calls from their Oppoſers ſo to do.

10*th. Obj.* That we have no Authority certain, to be depended on, that the Goſpel in Debate was in Being, and known to the World in the firſt Century.—— That it was near the Concluſion of the 2*d*, before it was ever pretended to be cited as *Matthew*'s *Goſpel*.—— That at beſt it is but a *Tranſlation*, which at no Time can be a proper *Foundation* of Our *Faith*, and *Hope*; much leſs when the *Tranſlator* is not known, and the *Tranſlation* it ſelf never examin'd into, or compar'd with the *Original*.

All the latter Part of this Objection the Vindicator yields to, He does not pretend to *Apoſtolic Tradition* (his old Refuge) that the *Original*, or ſo much as a *Copy* of *Matthew*'s *Hebrew*, had been ever ſeen among the *Gentiles* 'till *Jerom*'s Time; or that the *Tranſlator* was ever known, tho' one wou'd think a juſt *Tranſlation*, as it was of the laſt Importance to Religion, ſo was it the Duty of the *Chriſtian Prieſthood* to have been more than ordinarily careful about it, and never to have reſted, till they had found out the Original, or ſome One Copy at leaſt to have vouched for the Truth of it.

But altho' *Tradition* is entirely ſilent with Reſpect to the Tranſlation, both written and Oral, yet the *Vindicator* hath the Preſumption to affirm (*Vind. p.* 75.) "That at all Adventures we have the *Goſpel of St.* "*Matthew* in Senſe and Subſtance.—— That be

Our

" Our Goſpel a Verſion, or be it Original, it is " faithfully tranſmitted.—— That no One *Catholic* " *Chriſtian* ever doubted of it and the like. "—— *Catholic Chriſtian!* there's the *Sophiſm*; and is as much as to ſay, That all Believers believ'd it, which does not add to its Credit.

There have indeed been thoſe, who ſeeing the * Neceſſity that this Goſpel, as being (part of) the Foundation of Our Faith and Hope, ſhould have been *tranſlated* by ſome unerring Hand, have therefore aſcrib'd that Work to this, and that *Apoſtle*; but as theſe are mere Conjectures, and as Eccleſiaſtics could never agree about the Perſon,—— So it is more natural to believe, the *Gentile Goſpel* was always *Greek*, and conſequently one of the many, that ſtole into the World in the 2d Century.

As to the former Part of the *Objection*, which denies we have any certain Authority, that our preſent Goſpel of *Matthew* was extant in the firſt Age, or that it was ever nominally cited till toward the Cloſe of the 2d.—— The *Vindicator* anſwers in this Manner. (*Vind. p.* 34.) " Tho' it ſeems not to " have been the Cuſtom of *Church Writers*, 'till " the Days of *Irenæus*, (i. e. till near the End of " the 2d Century) to cite any Goſpel by *Name*, " yet they were cited without *Names* all along " from their *Publication*, and St. *Matthew's Title* " to the *Goſpel* called his, is corroborated within " leſs than fifty Years (by old *Papias*) after it came " abroad. "

He is forced to admit then, *That none of the Goſpels were cited by* Name, *till towards the Concluſion of the* 2d *Century.*—— A very ill Preſage this, and

* Many think it is to little Purpoſe, that the Authors of the N. T. were inſpir'd, if their Tranſlators and Tranſcribers throughout all Generations were not inſpir'd alſo, and that it would be no ſmall Reflection, on the Conduct of the Deity, to ſay he influenced the Writing of a Set of Books, and afterwards permitted them to be falſly tranſlated and tranſcribed.

too late in Time one would think, to be of any Service to the pretended Authors: But he affirms, *they were cited without* Names *from their (preſum'd early) Publication*, we ſhall ſee his Proofs preſently. —— He ſays, *Papias, who wrote* (as he pretends) *Anno* 110. *mentions* Matthew *and* Mark, *as the certain Authors of their reſpective Goſpels*, (Reply p. 25.) —— But hear *Papias*'s own Words concerning *Matthew*, ſo far as * *Euſebius* that injudicious, partial and fabulous Hiſtorian, is to be credited. —— Matthew (*ſays* Papias) *wrote his Book in the Hebrew Tongue.*—— And from theſe few dubious Words, dropp'd from a *poor ſimple old* † *Man of no Judgment*, and whoſe Teſtimony comes too late in Time to prove any Thing certain, Our Author is bold enough to affirm, that our *firſt Goſpel* is aſcertain'd to be *Matthew*'s.

Whereas, thoſe Words, if genuine, and ſpoke with any ſort of Knowledge, can in their utmoſt Latitude intend no more, than what we allow, *viz. That the Apoſtle* Matthew *might poſſibly compoſe a Book or Goſpel in* Hebrew, what we ſhrewdly ſuſpect is, that we have got One of a different Original; to remove which Doubt, the Words of old *Papias* are quite out of the way.—— *But ſee here in this* boaſted *Evidence brought by the* Vindicator, *what Credit is due to Him in Matters of this ſolemn Nature, and upon what uncertain Foundations, he makes Chriſtianity to ſubſiſt.*

In other Places (*Vind. p.* 82. 89.----*Reply, p.* 133. 148.) Our Author appeals to the pretended Epiſtles of

* H. E. *l.* 3. *c.* 39.

† See this Character of Him in Euseb. E. H. *l.* 3. *c.* 39.—— 'Tis pretended this Man was a *Biſhop*, that he liv'd at *Hierapolis* in *Phrygia* at a vaſt Diſtance from *Jeruſalem*.—— A notable Evidence, for the Authority of a Religious Book, pretended to have been publiſh'd there above fifty Years before his Time without a Name, where he had never been, and whoſe Language he never underſtood.

of *Clemens Romanus* and *Barnabas* (extant he ſuppoſes *before* the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*) to prove, that Our preſent (*tranſlated*) Goſpel was in Being in the firſt Age, and is the ſame with That, received in the Days of the *Apoſtles*.—— "He pretends here "we have in thoſe *Epiſtles* plain *Quotations*, which "tho' not exact and literal, yet often agree with "the preſent *Greek*, in *peculiar Turns of Expreſſion*."

But nothing can be more diſingenuous, than the Account the *Vindicator* gives of theſe Letters.—— There are two which bear the Name of *Pope Clemens*, the latter is generally given up as * ſpurious, the former has a better Name, but without Reaſon, being of as uncertain Date as the other.---It was of ſo little Account with the Antients, that they loſt it; and it was not retrieved till the laſt Century, and then but very imperfectly.--- It hath but one Quotation in all, pretended to be taken from the N. T. which conſiſts of ſeveral Scraps of Sentences put together, excerped here and there (as ſuppos'd) from it, but which may as well be refer'd to *Homer* or *Virgil*.--- *Barnabas*'s Epiſtle too is generally agreed to be a Forgery, neither is there any Certainty when 'twas wrote.--- The † Reverend Mr. *Jones* proves manifeſtly from its Internals, that 'twas wrote by ſome Pagan.--- The learned *Dodwell* pronounces of the Quotations in all theſe Epiſtles, § *That the Paſſages in them are ſo chang'd, that it cannot be known,*

* The CLEMENTINE Writings, ſays ATHANASIUS (or whoever was the Author of the *Synopſis*) are Apocryphal.— The Epiſtles of CLEMENS (ſays DAILLE) are Forgeries, *de uſu Patr. l.* 1. *c.* 3. CLEMENS firſt Epiſtle (ſays LE CLERC.) is great Part of it ſtole out of the *Stromata* of, CLEMENS ALEX. *Artis critic. Pars* 3. *S.* 2. *c.* 5.— BARNABAS's Epiſtle, ſays EUSEBIUS (H. E. *l.* 3. *c.* 25.) is a Forgery.— JEROM calls it Apocryphal.—Both CLEMENS and BARNABAS's Epiſtles are excluded the *Canon*, not only for the Uncertainty of the Authors, but for that there are ſo many ſilly and inexcuſable Things in them.

† Method of Settling the Canon, Vol. 2d. *ſub fin.*

§ Diſſertat. 1. in Iræneum S. 38. 39.

known, whether the Authors took them out of Ours, or ſome Apocryphal Goſpels.--- Dr. *Grabe* ſays, *Clemens cites Nothing from the N. T. except* Paul's *Epiſtles to the* Corinthians, *and* Barnabas *nothing at all.*--- Can any Thing therefore be more ſcandalous than the very Attempt of the *Vindicator*, to ſupport Goſpel-Revelation in ſo precarious a Manner by theſe Forgeries, *but they are like the reſt of his Proofs, he could find no better.*

It appears indeed throughout Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that the *Gentile* Chriſtians had ſome Information, the Apoſtle *Matthew* had compoſed a Goſpel in *Hebrew* for the Uſe of thoſe of the Circumciſion at *Jeruſalem.*--- This being ſpread abroad, there aroſe ('tis likely) ſome Time in the 2d Century, a *Greek Goſpel* bearing that Apoſtle's Name, and pretending to be a Tranſlation from his *Hebrew*, but we no where find the *Gentile Church* was ever appriz'd, how juſt this Pretence was, or that ſhe took the leaſt Care to be aſſured of the Truth of it, or indeed was in any Condition ſo to be; not one of her Members underſtanding the *Hebrew* Language, or any Language but their own; all Literature, polite Knowledge, and good Senſe being cry'd down, and baniſh'd from among them; even as REASON (that divine Faculty of the Mind, God's nobleſt and moſt perfect Gift to Man) is for Lucre's Sake, blaſphemouſly declaim'd againſt, as inſufficient to the End, by a certain *Biſhop.*—— And 'tis a Fact moſt notorious, and undeniable, that we have not the leaſt Trace in Antiquity concerning the *Tranſlator* or *Tranſlation* of this Goſpel, which is a demonſtrative Proof of the Supineſs, as well as Ignorance of the *firſt Chriſtians*, ſuppoſing it, as moſt do, to be indeed a *Tranſlation*, and conſequently what muſt needs render it very precarious with thinking Men; eſpecially if it be known, what Liberties the *Antients* have taken in their Works of that Nature,

Nature, and what Corruptors and Curtailers of other Men's Labours in the very * Act of *tranſlating* they have always been.—— The *Chriſtians* of the firſt and ſecond Ages, to deſcend no lower, being as obſerv'd a Collection of the moſt illiterate Populace, Deſpiſers of Learning, and exceeding credulous withal; 'twas the eaſieſt Thing in the World for the † *Jews* to impoſe a falſe Goſpel on them, pretending it came from *Jeruſalem*; nay, if any Credit is due to Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, *Chriſtians* themſelves were in thoſe Days and long after, ſo addicted to Forgery, that the Number of *Goſpels*, *Acts*, *Epiſtles*, *Revelations*, &c. produced by them, in Abuſe of one another, was infinite; and ſuch celebrated *Lyars* were they, and ſo notorious all the World over for *Impoſture*, that a *Chriſtian* or a *Jew* (which were Uniſon in the Heathen World) and a *Lyar* were the ſame thing; it being a very early receiv'd Maxim, and retain'd for the moſt Part among the Clergy at this Day, in all their religious Diſputes on the ſide of Orthodoxy; that to ſuppreſs Truth, and actually to lye, or advance evaſive Anſwers, or fictitious Evidence for God's Sake, or for retaining old exploded Doctrines, and maintaining the Power of the *Church*, was, and is look'd upon, as highly meritorious before *Chriſt*; ſo that to thoſe who now-a-days ſit looſe from Prejudice, and who are appriz'd of the Truth of theſe Things, and have them daily before their Eyes; 'tis no ſuch great Wonder, One Apocryphal Goſpel at leaſt ſhould ariſe, and make its Way into the Canon, and yet (tho' known) be retain'd, when it was once there.

11*th. Obj.*--- To the late Writing of this *Goſpel*, fix'd uncertainly by *Iræneus* to the Time of *Peter* and *Paul*'s preaching at *Rome*, the Vindicator anſwers

* See DAILLE *de Uſu Patrum l.* 1. *c.* 3. & 4. where Villanies of this Nature are ſufficiently enumerated and expos'd.

† See Dr. WHITBY's Tract on *Traditions*, which ſhews how liable the *Fathers* were to be impos'd on by the *Jews*.

ſwers very ſeriouſly, (*p.* 68.) "That if according to "Biſhop *Pearſon*, *Paul* came to *Rome* in *February*, "*Anno* 61. it is probable St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel was "written that very Year, or at lateſt, the Year "after." Our Author takes no Notice here of *Peter*, whoſe coming to *Rome* poſſibly might be much later, if he came at all: But we ſhall not contend with him farther on this Head; He admits the *Goſpel* was not wrote till about the Year 61 or 62. of the Nativity; which was a Length of Time ſufficient to eraſe the greateſt Part, of what *Jeſus* had either ſaid or done in his Life-time, out of this Writer's Memory, of which indeed the Goſpel itſelf is a flagrant Proof.

What the *Vindicator* would inſinuate further, "That beſides his bare Mem'ry, *Matthew* had the "Aſſiſtance of the *H. Ghoſt*, to bring all neceſſary "Particulars to his Remembrance."—— I would adviſe our Author not to inſiſt upon Imaginations ſo vain, and without Authority; aſſuring Himſelf, that *God* never interpoſes miraculouſly to ſupply Neceſſities, which are the ſole Effects of our Wantonneſs and Neglects; and that to ſay he does, is to make Him the Abettor of whatever is weak and wicked. But I refer the Reader to the *Diſſertation* and *Defence* for more full Satisfaction on this Head. —— In the mean Time, I proceed to ſhew, from ſome *internal Marks* in this *Goſpel*, that the ſame is very probably a Work of the 2*d Century*.

There are ſeveral Maxims of *Criticiſm* laid down by learned Men, for the Diſcovery of *Suppoſititious Books*; I ſhall take Notice of but two or three only.

In the firſt Place, the *Style* of a Book, or Manner of Writing many Times betrays the Author, not to be the Perſon common Fame pretends, or he may aſſume to be.—— Proofs of this Nature, againſt the *Apoſtle Matthew*'s being the Compoſer of our *firſt Goſpel*,

Goſpel, are contained in the 1ſt, 2d, 4th and 6th Objections.

Then 2dly there can be no greater Proof, of an Apocryphal Book of *Holy Scripture*, than when it contains *fabulous or ſilly Relations*, ſuch for Inſtance, as is That in the 2d Chapter of this *Goſpel*, concerning *three Men, their coming a long Journey from the Eaſt, and led by a Star to* Bethlehem, *and then pointing down there to a little Stall or Stable where* Jeſus *was born*.—— A Fact in the Nature of the Thing impoſſible, and in the Event, of no Conſequence.

Laſtly, *Time* is a great Diſcoverer of *Fraud*—— As when the Author ſhews himſelf entirely ignorant of certain notorious *Facts*, which had he lived in the *Time* and *Place*, when and where thoſe *Facts* happen'd, and were publickly known, and recorded; he could not poſſibly have been ignorant of, or miſreported. Again--- a *Book* is diſcover'd to be *ſuppoſititious*, when it mentions Facts done *later in Time*, than the ſame, if genuine, muſt needs have been publiſh'd, or than the Perſon, who is made to ſpeak of them, lived. Of both theſe I ſhall give ſome few Inſtances out of our firſt Goſpel. The

1*ſt*. I deduce from the *ſpurious Genealogy* the Author gives us of *Jeſus*, his ſeveral Miſtakes in which, make it evident, that he was neither an *inſpir'd Apoſtle*, nor a *Jew*, nor even a Contemporary with *Jeſus*, in either of which Caſes, he muſt neceſſarily have been better inform'd; but living, 'tis likely, at a great Diſtance of Time and Place from *Jeſus*, and being a Stranger to his Family and Perſon, and withal, to the *Jewiſh Scriptures and Language*, he fell unavoidably into thoſe *Miſtakes*.

2. My ſecond Proof ariſes from the groſs Blunder of the Author; in placing *Jeſus*'s *Nativity* where he does, which according to him, fell out ſome Time in the Reign of *Herod the Great*, he dar'd not to

fix

fix the Year—— Whereas acccording to St. *Luke*, that great Event did not happen (as I have ſhewn above) till about *eleven Years* after. One or other of theſe *Evangeliſts* muſt be wrong, but as *Luke* is generally eſteem'd, and that juſtly, the moſt accurate Writer of the two, and the beſt acquainted with *Jewiſh Story*, we are conſtrain'd to place it to the Account of our *firſt Evangeliſt*, whoſe Miſtakes in This, and other Reſpects, ſhew him to have been ſome ignorant *Greek* of the 2d Century, and not an *Hebrew* of the firſt; who living near the Time, and in the Scene of Action, could not poſſibly have fallen into Errors ſo enormous, but which might eaſily befal, a careleſs inaccurate Author, who wrote upon Hearſay, in another Country, and above an hundred Years after the Fact.

3. ---That this *Goſpel* was compil'd late, and by an ignorant Author, who had in his Head but a confus'd Notion of Things, is clear, from the Words he adventures to put into our Saviour's Mouth, *ch.* xxiii. *v.* 35. *viz. That upon you may come, all the righteous Blood, ſhed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous* Abel, *unto the Blood of* Zacharias *the Son of* Barachias *whom ye ſlew between the Temple and the Altar.*—— which *Zacharias*, we learn from * *Joſephus*, was ſlain in the Commotions, immediately preceding the *Siege and Deſtruction of Jeruſalem*, which fell out in the Year 70, ſome Years after this Goſpel is pretended to have come to Light.

Now had the Author gone about his Hiſtory, ſome few Years after the *Jewiſh Wars*, when the Troubles preceding, and cauſing thoſe *Wars* were diſtinctly known and freſh in Memory, he could never have committed ſo egregious a Blunder; but writing in another Age, and being an utter Stranger to the Affairs of the *Jews*, he makes our Saviour ſpeak

* *De Bell. l.* 4. *c.* 5.

ſpeak of a Fact, as done and paſt in his own Life-time, which did not really happen, till near 40 Years after his Deceaſe.

I am not unaware that *Eccleſiaſtics* have taken immenſe Pains, to ſolve this Difficulty too, as they ſoftly term it; ſome think *Jeſus* ſpoke *prophetically*, others that the *Text* hath been *corrupted*, &c. But all the MSS have it, and the Words are too plain to be alluded: Beſides that the *Condemnation* of the *Jewiſh Nation*, and the *Judgment* threatned in this Context, are vain, irrational, repugnant to the *Word* of *God*, and to natural Juſtice; and conſequently manifeſt the Author to have been ſome illiterate Impoſtor. For with what Propriety, could *God* require the Blood of Men ſlain three or four thouſand Years before, of the Generation of *Jews* exiſting, when our Saviour was upon the Earth? But This by the Way only; and to give an additional Proof of the *Non-Inſpiration*, *Superſtition* and *Folly* of this Writer.

4. I ſhall trouble my Reader, with but one Proof more, of the late Writing this *Goſpel*; deduced from its *Internals*, which I take from *ch.* xxvii. *v.* 7, 8. *And they took Counſel, and bought the Potter's Field to bury Strangers in, wherefore That Field was call'd the Field of Blood unto* this Day. And *ch.* xxviii. *v.* 15. there is the ſame Expreſſion.

Which Expreſſion *unto this Day*, alway imports, a conſiderable Length of Time paſt, ſometimes many Ages, but never a few Days or Years only. The like Expreſſion frequently occurs in the * O. T. and never imports leſs than an Age paſt: But I am furniſhed with a Proof out of this Goſpel it ſelf, *ch.* xi. *v.* 23. *And thou* Capernaum *which art exalted unto Heaven, ſhalt be brought down to Hell, for if the mighty Works which have been done in* Thee, *had been done in* Sodom, *it would have remained* unto

 this

* *Deut.* 34. 6. 1 *Sam.* 30. 25. 2 *Sam.* 4. 3. and 7. 6, &c.

this Day; which laſt Words, as they ſtand here, will bear no other Conſtruction, than what is before contended for, and being compar'd with the firſt mentioned Text, are a manifeſt Proof, that our firſt Goſpel was compoſed by a much later Hand than that of an Apoſtle: *So hard is it for a Man to write the ſmalleſt Treatiſe, in the Character of another of a more early Age, and not betray his own Time thro' ſome Inadvertence.*

12*th. Obj.*--- That if *Mark*'s *Goſpel* is *Divine*, *Matthew*'s cannot be ſo too, ſince the One is apparently but a licentious Copy, or Abridgment of the Other; which cannot be imputed to the *H. Ghoſt*, who never ſteals from One Man's Works, to give to Another; or nauſeates our Minds with *Tautology* and *Impertinence.*

To this the *Vindicator* anſwers (*Vind. p.* 94.) "That "of the Antients he thinks, St. *Auſtin* is the only "One, who ſuppoſes *Mark*'s *Goſpel* to be an *Epi-* "*tome of Matthew*'s, but that *Moderns* have prov'd "the contrary, particularly *Father Simon*," but he durſt not repeat *Pere Simon*'s Words; let us hear then what this great Man ſays; taking Notice firſt, that St. *Auſtin* conſider'd *Mark* as an *Abbreviator of Matthew*, he proceeds "* If we compare theſe "two Goſpels together, we ſhall find not only the "*ſame Things*, but alſo the *very ſame Expreſſions*, "which St. *Mark* ſometimes *Epitomizeth*, as if he "had a Deſign only of making an *Abſtract* of the "Goſpel of St. *Matthew.*" then follows, "But "*Mark* cannot paſs for a *ſimple Abbreviator*, for "that he inſiſts more at large than *Matthew* doth "*in ſome Places*; Beſides, (continues he) if he had "only a Deſign, to have publiſh'd an *Epitome* of "*Matthew*'s Goſpel, he would not have omitted "the *Genealogy of Jeſus.*" But the Reaſon of that we ſhall ſee preſently.

'Tis

* Crit. Hiſt. N. T. *Part.* 1. *ch.* 10.

'Tis moſt evident therefore from this Critic's own Words, that he look'd upon *Mark's Goſpel*, in the main, as a Copy, or *Abbreviation of Matthew's*. *Compare* (ſays he) *the two Goſpels together, and you will find not only the ſame Things, but the very ſame Expreſſions.* But then he could not conſider *Mark* altogether, as a *juſt* Abbreviator, becauſe in *ſome Places* he inſiſts on Things licentiouſly, or more at large, which the Objection allows. Thus is our Author, notwithſtanding all his Confidence and Boaſtings, (*Reply, p.* 146.) abſolutely refuted by his own cited Authority.

'Twas the apparent *Similitude* between the two *Goſpels*, that extracted the following Confeſſion from Mr. *Whiſton*, (otherwiſe the warmeſt Zealot for enlarging Revelation that any Age hath produced.) "*St.* Mark, (ſays that * Reverend Man) *was the* "*Epitomizer of* Matthew, *he gives us ſuch an Ac-*"*count of our Saviour's Acts, as demonſtrates that St.* "Matthew's *Goſpel lay then before Him, and was* "*the almoſt only Guide he follow'd in his Hiſtory.*"

St. *Auſtin*, the firſt great Schoolman, and new Modeller of *Chriſtianity* in ſome of its moſt weighty Articles, has theſe Words, † *Marcus Matthæum ſequiter tamquam Pediſſequus, & Breviator ejus videtur:* And after him the great *Eraſmus*, *Sixtus Senenſis*, *Grotius*, *Spanheim*, and other the moſt able, and Zealous Divines, convinced by ocular Demonſtration, have affirmed the ſame Thing. And did not the *Vindicator* ſtand in Awe of his Superiors, and contend for *Victory* rather than *Truth*, he would own Himſelf to be of the ſame Opinion, ſince (*Vind. p.* 94, 95,) he has been able to find ſo few, and thoſe inconſiderable Differences beween *Mark* and *Matthew*.

As to *Mark*'s having omitted all Mention of *Matthew*'s two firſt Chapters, (which Argument

* Chron. & Harm. *p.* 102. † De Conſenſ. Eccl. *l.* 1. *c.* 2.

Pere Simon uſes only as a Cloak to conceal his true Sentiment) this can be no Proof againſt a Fact ſelf-evident, if it proves any Thing, it is This, That when *Matthew*'s *Goſpel* lay before *Mark*, * thoſe two Chapters were no Part of it.

The Books of the N. T. being all Occaſional (and by the Way, not fully collected till the 7th Century) and many of the firſt *Chriſtans*, thinking Themſelves as wiſe or wiſer than the *Apoſtles*, of whoſe Inſpiration they had never heard. † They ſaw no great Harm in, nor conſequently made any Difficulty of, adding to, or defalking from, their Writings; nay, they deem'd it a *Virtue* rather, to make Alterations in them, provided ſuch Alterations were (in their Conceits) more for the *Honour of God*: A *primitive Chriſtian* having no Notion of any *new Canon* of *inſpir'd Scripture* ariſing in his Days, if he did but § *tranſcribe*, or *tranſlate*, he would freely add *new Matter* of his own, or leave out what did not ſquare with his Notions. And ſuch a Tranſcriber, *Mark* or *Matthew* appears to have been, let the *Vindicator* make his own Choice: For as Mr. *Whiſton* obſerves, one or other of the Goſpels, was certainly before Him, whoever he was, that wrote laſt.

13*th. Obj.*--- This relates entirely to the *Nazaren* or *Hebrew Goſpel* ſo call'd, which *Epiphanius* and *Jerom*, towards the Concluſion of the 4th, or Beginning of the 5th Age, found preſerv'd, among the

* Thoſe two Chapters have been much ſuſpected to be Additions to the Original Goſpel, and indeed, the *ſpurious Genealogy* given of *Jeſus*, the *Anachroniſm*, together with the *Improbability*, if not *Impoſſibility* of ſome Facts therein related, prove them mere *Gnoſtic* Forgeries. *Vid.* EPIPHAN. *Hær.* 30.

† The *Weſtern* Churches began very early to receive or reject ſacred Books, according as they ſuited their own Opinions, or not in religious Matters. WHIST. *Eſſay on Apoſtolic Conſt. p.* 476.

§ Scribunt (*ſays* Jerom) non quod inveniunt ſed quod intelligunt, & dum alienos Errores emendare nituntur, oſtendunt ſuos. *Epiſt.* 28. *ad Lucin. Tom.* 1.

the *Jewiſh* Converts in *Paleſtine*, and which thoſe Fathers judg'd, to be the *genuine Goſpel* of St. *Matthew moſt entire*; tho' it differ'd from Ours in all its Parts. For this Reaſon, and for that *the Chriſtian World was generally in the ſame Perſwaſion*; St. *Jerom* having obtain'd a Copy, actually tranſlated it into *Greek* and *Latin*, with Deſign to propagate, and probably to get it eſtabliſh'd in the *Chriſtian Canon*: But as he could not effect this during his Life, ſo after his Deceaſe, neither the *Nazaren* Copies nor *Jerom*'s Tranſlations, were ever more heard of, being (as ſuppos'd) induſtriouſly deſtroy'd, to make Way for our preſent Goſpel.

The *Vindicator* ſeeing the Conſequence, if this ſingle Objection ſhould be carry'd, and the *Nazaren* Goſpel adjudg'd to be the true Goſpel of *Matthew*, hath therefore labour'd againſt it more obſtinately than any other; but failing in Point of Argument, he raiſes Queſtions, and makes private Conjectures in order to puzzle, and in ſo far as he can, render a certain Fact doubtful. The Sum of what he alleges (*Vind. p.* 78, 79.) is This---" That it " hath been very much, and very juſtly *Queſtion'd* " by learned Men, whether the *Nazarens* were the " *firſt Chriſtian Converts*, and whether they were " ever poſſeſſed, of the *Original Hebrew of St.* " Matthew's *Goſpel*; That almoſt four entire Cen- " turies paſs'd, without the leaſt mention of that " *Goſpel*'s being extant, either among *them*, or the " *Ebionites*; That *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* are the " firſt, that ſpeak of the *Nazarens*, and of their " uſing the *Authentic Hebrew of St.* Matthew, But " that they do not pretend, they had either *Hiſtory* " or *Tradition* for it; That it ſeems only to have " been the Judgment of their own Times, found- " ed on no other Reaſon, than becauſe St. *Matthew* " alone publiſh'd his Goſpel in the *Hebrew Tongue*; " That therefore we ought not too haſtily to give

" into

" into thoſe two Fathers Accounts, when they tell us, " the *Nazarens* and *Ebionites* uſe the *Authentic He-* " *brew of* Matthew, For that thoſe Sects them- " ſelves, aſſign'd no ſuch *Title* to their own *Goſ-* " *pels.*" In his *Supplement* and *Reply*, he repeats much the ſame Matter, dwelling upon This, *That becauſe thoſe Chriſtians commonly call'd their Goſpel, not the Goſpel according to St.* Matthew, *but according to the* Hebrews, *therefore* (he conjectures) *they muſt have intended another Goſpel*, and conſequently, that ſuppoſing thoſe *Chriſtians*, poſſeſſed indeed the *true Goſpel*, yet that they Themſelves muſt have been *ignorant* of it, which is ridiculous enough.

Now the firſt Thing I would obſerve is, That had the *Title* to the *Nazaren Goſpel* expreſs'd the Author, that then thoſe *Chriſtians* adhering to ſuch *Title*, had given manifeſt Proof of their Belief, with Reſpect to the Author.

But as they Intitul'd their *Goſpel* merely the *Hebrew Goſpel*, or That *according to the* Hebrews, they can by no Conſtruction, be ſaid to exclude *Matthew*, or any other Perſon from being the known Compiler of it.

St. *Matthew*'s *Goſpel* being famous in Antiquity for its ſole Compoſition in *Hebrew*, and as intended for the more particular Uſe, of the *Hebrew Nation*; therefore the Converts of that *Nation* call'd it the *Hebrew Goſpel* by way of favorite Diſtinction, and ſole Appropriation of it to Themſelves: And as they rejected all other Goſpels, this alone is a Proof, that they aſcrib'd it to ſome Divine Author. But I will proceed now to anſwer the *Vindicator* in his own Method.

His firſt Attempt is, to have it believ'd, that the immediate Diſciples of *Jeſus* did not aſſume to Themſelves the Name of *Nazarens*, after their Maſter: but this not being very material to my preſent Point, I ſhall not contend it here with Him, neither

neither is there Occaſion, * the Defender having already prov'd it, from *Reaſon*, from *Scripture*, and the Evidence of all *Antiquity*.

And whereas the *Vindicator* takes upon him to aſſert, that this Fact, tho' Part of † Revelation, hath been much *Queſtion'd* by *learned Men*, I could wiſh he had given the Names of thoſe *learned Men*; for I cannot be inform'd of any One Perſon ſo malignant, that ever oppos'd Himſelf to this manifeſt ſcriptural Truth, before Mr. *Mangey*, who wrote a Libel againſt Mr. *Toland*, full of the moſt notorious Falſhhoods, and the moſt pitiful and barefac'd Evaſions, that ever dropp'd from the Pen of a Jeſuitical Bigot——Not to mention the rude Language, with which he at every Turn treats a Gentleman, in Reſpect of whoſe Reading and Judgment, in Sacred Literature, Himſelf was a mere Novice: But to return.

The *Vindicator* having it ſtrong in Imagination, that the *Nazarens* ſo called, were not of the *firſt Converts*, but rather an *Heretical Sect* ſprung out from among them: The next Thing he queſtions is, *Whether they were ever poſſeſſed of St.* Matthew's Original Hebrew? for being *Heretics*, he would conclude, they muſt needs have uſed an *Heretical Goſpel*. But ſuch Concluſion, if he has not a Care, may pull down and deſtroy more, than what he can hope to erect, and eſtabliſh by it.

For all the *Fathers* we know, and can prove by their Works, were *Heretics* even down to St. *Auſtin*, and yet the whole Authority of the N. T. takes its Origin from their *Writings*, and is founded upon their *Teſtimony*; and which with Reſpect to the Goſpel in Debate, is therefore the more precarious, in that we know the *Fathers* were wholly in the Dark, as

* Defence, *p.* 51. *&c.*

† See *Acts* 24, 5, and 14. where PAUL own'd himſelf a *Nazaren*, acknowledging that in their Way he worſhipp'd God.

as to its due Tranſmiſſion to them in the *Greek*. Not ſo the *Nazarens*, whoſe Goſpel was tranſmitted to them in its native *Hebrew*, thro' but a few Generations, and by thoſe Hands, of whoſe Fidelity they were well aſſured, even by their own Anceſtors, who had been the Depoſitaries of its Original; and who would be as careful of tranſmitting it pure to their own Poſterity, as they would be cautious, of making it public to the *Gentiles*, even as their Forefathers had been of the Books of the O.T. who ('tis reported) kept an Aniverſary-Day of Humiliation, for many Generations, on Account of the *Septuagint Verſions* being made at the Requeſt of an Heathen King.

It muſt be a ſtrong Preſumption with Men of *Probity* and *Senſe*, notwithſtanding all the Impertinencies of the Fathers, that the Goſpel which *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* found in Poſſeſſion of the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians in *Paleſtine*, was the genuine Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, if any ſuch Goſpel there ever was; for that the *Jewiſh Church*, always watchful over their *Scriptures*, had no other, 'twas their only *Goſpel* they had to preſerve and cheriſh, and it was next to impoſſible, they ſhould be deceived in a Tradition from their Fathers of ſo ſhort ſtanding, concerning a ſingle Book, publiſh'd among themſelves, and upon the ſole Dictates of which, they founded their *New Religion*, and this too, when they had no other Scripture of the like Nature, to mix and confound with it.

And whereas the *Vindicator* makes it a great Matter, *that* Epiphanius *and* Jerom *ſhould be the firſt, that ſpeak of the* Nazarens *uſing the* Authentic Hebrew *of St.* Matthew; ſuppoſing this to be Fact, and that antient Hiſtory hath been neither curtail'd nor deſtroy'd in that Reſpect, what can be infer'd from it more, than the deplorable Negligence, and Ignorance of the *Gentile Church* to that Time, who

ſhould

ſhould know ſo little of thoſe People, to whom they were immediately indebted for their *New Religion*.

But after all, Nothing can be more expreſſive, of the *Vindicator*'s Bigotry and Partiality on this Head, than his excepting to the *Judgment* of thoſe *two Fathers* in the preſent Queſtion, who being *Eccleſiaſtics* of more Learning than any in their Time, and having ſojourned many Years, in the midſt of thoſe *Chriſtians* themſelves, their united Judgment ſhould be of more Weight in this Matter, than that of the whole * *Tribe of Scribling Fathers* beſides, who living at a great Diſtance, both of Time and Place, were abſolute Strangers to the firſt Converts, their Affairs and Language. Beſides as thoſe two *Fathers* witneſs'd againſt one of the Goſpels already canoniz'd by the Church, to whoſe Traditions, in all other Reſpects, they were entirely conform, and ever moſt forward to declare againſt Apocryphal Books; nothing but the *Force of Truth*, could have extracted the Confeſſion from them.

What the *Vindicator* adds, that neither *Epiphanius* nor *Jerom*, pretend to *Hiſtory* or *Tradition*, for calling the *Nazaren Goſpel*, the *Original Hebrew of* Matthew, is not to be regarded. For will any one believe, ſo learned and orthodox a Divine as *Jerom* was, would have taken the Pains to tranſlate the Goſpel, which he had of the † *Beræans* into two the moſt known Languages, in order to propagate it thro' all Nations, if he had not been firſt con-

 vinced

* Origen was ſome ſhort Time to and again in *Paleſtine*, but by his remaining Writings, ſeems to have known very little concerning the *Jewiſh* Converts.— And Eusebius, tho' Biſhop of *Cæſarea*, and a Man of ſome Learning, yet of no Judgment, ignorant of the *Hebrew*, and ſuch a Party-man, that if he knew any Thing good of theſe Converts, he would not report it.

† Theſe were the Deſcendants of thoſe noble Chriſtians, *Acts*. 17. 11. who were ſo highly extoll'd for ſearching the Scriptures, and inquiring into the Truth of Things, and therefore it is not at all probable, that thoſe who had the beſt Means, and took the moſt effectual Care to prevent Impoſture, that they Themſelves ſhould be ſeduced by it.

vinced the ſame was of ſacred Authority, whence-ſoever that Conviction of his might ariſe. Whether from ſome *internal Proofs* taken from the *Goſpel* itſelf, or moſt likely from the *Tradition* of thoſe Chriſtians, and *Judgment* of thoſe * Antients, who he knew had made Uſe of this *Goſpel* before him. It appears evidently from their own Words often repeated, that both *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* were really convinced of its *Apoſtolic Authority*, tho' they have not acquainted Poſterity, with the Means or Motives to ſuch Conviction.

But the Vindicator would ſtill infer, that becauſe this Goſpel was (more generally) called *the Goſpel according to the* Hebrews, that therefore it muſt needs have been a *diſtinct Goſpel* from St. *Matthew*'s Original; and is very angry and abuſive in his Reply (*p.* 106, 107.) that the Defender ſhould ſay, the *Nazarens* and *Ebionites* themſelves called it *the Authentic Goſpel of St.* Matthew: Whereas (ſays the Vindicator) *it was not called ſo by them, but by moſt* (other Chriſtians) of that Time, as in Truth it was.

But this Acknowledgment of the *Vindicator* makes the Proof for the Genuineneſs of the *Nazaren Goſpel* ſtill more ſtable againſt him, for if *moſt Chriſtians* eſteem'd and call'd this Goſpel, the *Authentic Goſpel of* Matthew, we can no longer doubt, but that they took the Appellation from the Poſſeſſors of it, and that theſe when they nam'd the Author, call'd it ſo too; for it ſhould ſeem incredible, that all the World ſhould find out that this Goſpel was the Authentic *Hebrew* of *Matthew*, and that the *Hebrews* themſelves ſhould know nothing of it. Neither can there be any Diſpute but that *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* had both *Hiſtory* and † *Tradition* for what they ſaid. Thoſe

* Ignatius, Papias, Hegesippus, Justin M. Clem. Alex. Origen, *&c.*

† That Epiphanius had Tradition is evident, when he tells us (*Hær.* 30.) that this ſame *Hebrew Goſpel*, was before his Time, found in a Cell at *Tiberias*, actually inſcrib'd to St. *Matthew*.

Thoſe Chriſtians of whom *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* ſpeak, aſſembled in and about *Cæſarea*, *Beræa* and the Parts adjacent in *Syria* and *Paleſtine*, muſt be the ſole Remains of the *Jewiſh Church* at that Time. If therefore the *true Goſpel* was loſt to them, it was loſt to the whole *Jewiſh Church*, which is ſcarce credible; conſidering how tenacious that People ever were of their *Sciptures*, and that in the *New Religion* they had aſſum'd, they had no other *Scripture* to truſt to.

But let us leave *Epiphanius* and *Jerom* for a while, and hear what *Pere Simon* (the moſt judicious and beſt accompliſh'd Critic the Church ever had, and of whoſe Authority the Vindicator himſelf ſometimes boaſts) hath further obſerved of this *Nazaren Goſpel*.

He remarks, * " That the Antient *Nazarens* " whoſe principal Abode (after the Deſtruction of " *Jeruſalem*) was in the City *Beræa*, were deſcen- " ded from the *primitive Chriſtians*, who retir'd " from *Jeruſalem* to *Pella*, († by Warning from " the H. G.) That we ought therefore to ſeek for " the Original of St. *Matthew*'s *Goſpel*, among " thoſe *Nazarens* who preſerv'd it in their *Churches* " (down to *Epiphanius*'s and *Jerom*'s Time) *moſt* " *entire*, That the moſt antient Eccleſiaſtical Au- " thors, have cited it, as the *true Goſpel of St.* Mat- " thew. That if it were not loſt, we might have " Recourſe to it at this Day, to reſolve ſeveral Dif- " ficulties in our *Greek Verſion*. That it cannot be " averr'd, the *Catholics* never acknowledg'd any " other Copy of St. *Matthew* than the *Greek*, ſince " the *Jews* of the Territory of *Jeruſalem*, who em- " braced the *Chriſtian Religion*, and were called " *Nazarens*, have been the *firſt Chriſtians* in the " World, it would be a piece of Injuſtice in us, to " treat them as *Heretics*, having *falſe Goſpels*. That

* Crit. Hiſt. N. T. *Part.* 1. *ch.* 7.

† Eusebb. H. E. *l.* 3. *c.* 5.

" if the *Nazarens* had (poſſibly) inſerted ſome Ad-
" ditions in it, they were not falſe, but received
" by them from good Hands, and that therefore
" we ſhould not reject them, for in ſuch Caſe, we
" ſhould be oblig'd to reject every Copy of the
" N. T. now extant; becauſe there is not One in
" any Language whatſoever, that is abſolutely free
" from Additions. That the *Nazaren Goſpel* can-
" not be called *Apocryphal*, nor ought it to be com-
" par'd with the *Goſpel* intitul'd *according to the* E-
" gyptians, the *Acts of* Barnabas, and the like Im-
" poſtures; for that it cannot be doubted, but that
" it was *certainly compos'd by the Apoſtle whoſe Name*
" *it bears.* That the *Nazaren Goſpel* was the moſt
" *antient Act* of the *Chriſtian Religion*; for as to St.
" *Matthew's Goſpel* (now extant) there is Reaſon to
" believe, He that tranſlated it out of *Hebrew* into
" *Greek*, hath epitomized it in ſome Places, and ſome-
" times taken the Liberty, rather to give us the
" *Senſe*, than the Words." Such were this great Man's Thoughts of the *Nazaren* and St. *Matthew's* Goſpels.

But what need we more—— The *Vindicator* himſelf admits (*Vind. p.* 79.) *that the* Ebionites *of Old, uſed the pure and uninterpolated Goſpel of* Matthew, and in his *Supplement* (*p.* 31. *Margin.*) he allows *the Goſpels of the* Nazarens *and* Ebionites, *were in the main the ſame*, ſo he is convicted by his own ſhewing.

But then he adds a little after, " That thoſe *old*
" *Ebionites* had alſo *another* Goſpel, with the Title
" *according to the* Hebrews, or *twelve Apoſtles*, the
" ſame (he pretends) with That, which in the in-
" termediate Times had been quoted by *Clemens*
" *Alex. Origen* and *Euſebius*, as Apocryphal." But he brings no Proof of this; neither does it appear in Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory, that the *Jewiſh* Chriſtians ever made uſe of, more than one Goſpel. So that after what has been ſaid, there can be no Room to doubt, but that the Goſpel according to the *Hebrews*,

to

to the *twelve Apoſtles*, to *Matthew*, and to I know not how many Names beſides, was originally One and the ſame *Hebrew Goſpel*, the Author of it uncertain, there never having been but One of the Kind; but *Clemens* and *Euſebius* not underſtanding the *Hebrew Language*, could not poſſibly be correct in their Judgment concerning it; had they indeed quoted it, in the Manner our Author pretends they do, but he grievouſly impoſes on his Reader, when he ſays they quote it as *Apocryphal*, for 'tis certain * neither of them mention it as ſuch. And *Origen* mentions it but once in his † *Greek*, in which he is far from citing it as Apocryphal. And as to his *Latin Works*, 'tis known they are vitiated and of no Authority.

The Truth of the whole Caſe is this, Had our firſt Goſpel better agreed with the *Nazaren*, we ſhould never have heard of the latter's being either corrupt, or Apocryphal: But as ſoon as it came to be known, that it differ'd very materially from the *Gentile Goſpel*, the *Fathers* were reſolv'd to caſt the Dirt from their own Doors, They called their own Goſpel, *pure*, *genuine*, *authentic*, and the *Nazaren* Goſpel they term'd *Apocryphal*, *abſurd*, *ſpurious*. Tho' 'tis agreed among them, the Apoſtle compoſed his Goſpel for the *Nazarens*; and tho' 'tis confeſs'd they had the *Original Goſpel* in their Keeping, which the *Fathers* never pretended to have ſeen, but on the contrary always admitted their Goſpel to be no other than a *Tranſlation* out of the *Hebrew*, not conſidering, that ſuch Conceſſion alone put an End to its *Divine*

* CLEMENS mentions it (*Strom. l. 2. p.* 380.) no where elſe, and without any Cenſure.—EUSEBIUS's Words are (*l* 3. *c.* 25.) among theſe (*viz.* ſpurious Books) Τινες (ſome) place the Goſpel according to the *Hebrews*: his uſing the Word Τινες, and ſaying they were only *ſome* who look'd upon this Goſpel as *Apocryphal*, is a plain Intimation, that a great many believ'd It genuine, Τινες *a paucis quibuſdam* (ſome few) *Mill. Proleg. pag.* 6. *Edit. Kuſter.*

† Tom. 2. Com. in Joann. *p.* 58.

Divine Authority. A *Tranſlation* ſurely, being utterly inconſiſtent with that entire Reſignation, Eſteem, and Reverence, which every ſacred Original demands of us. It being a known Truth, that no *Tranſlation*, how faithfully and accurately ſoever perform'd, hath ever come up to the Force and Energy of, and conſequently done perfect Juſtice to its Original. For which Reaſon (no Doubt) it was, that both *Antients* and *Moderns* have been willing to impute the *Tranſlation* of this Goſpel to ſome *infallible Perſon*, tho' they cannot agree who that Perſon was. *Jerom* honeſtly confeſſes, the *Tranſlator* was never known; and if ſo, then for ought we know, it may be a very *faulty Tranſlation*, and the Goſpel may have been *Epitomized* as well as *Tranſlated*, as *Pere Simon* conceives it to be, and conſequently was the Original *Hebrew* of the *Nazarens* now in Being, our *tranſlated Goſpel* would not be able to ſtand before it.

So I have done with the *Nazaren*, or if you pleaſe, the genuine Goſpel of St. *Matthew*, preſerv'd down to the 5th Century *moſt entire*. And here a Man cannot help lamenting, and ſhewing his utmoſt Abhorrence, of the Bigotry and inſufferable Inſolence of the *ruling Clergy* in the fifth Age; in daring to impoſe on the Belief, and common Senſe of Mankind, with Reſpect to the *Goſpel* in Debate: For altho' it was notorious, that all *Apoſtolic Tradition* concerning it, and its *Tranſlation*, was to the laſt Degree precarious; and tho' they could give no Manner of Account thro' what Canal it came from the *Jewiſh Church* to them, or indeed, that the *Jewiſh Chriſtians* ever had ſuch a Goſpel, no ſuch Goſpel whether *Greek* or *Hebrew* having ever appear'd among them. Yet when Authentic Copies of the Apoſtle's *Autograph* came to hand; and the *Gentile Chriſtians* had a fair Opportunity given them, and (as appears) were well inclin'd to embrace the

true

true Goſpel, and diſmiſs that which was *ſpurious*, yet their Clergy forſooth, would not ſuffer it; they wilfully deſtroy'd the *true Goſpel*, and rather than acknowledge the *Church* (as they call'd Themſelves) to have been in *Error*, above three hundred Years before, they choſe not only to perſiſt in the ſame *Error*, but put it out of the Power of Poſterity, ever to reform it thereafter. *Monſtrous Iniquity!* They ſaw this poor genuine Goſpel, rude as it came from the illiterate Apoſtle's Hands, and they were aſham'd to own it, They ſaw it bore ſmall Reſemblance to their other Goſpel, that it would falſify and deſtroy it, therefore they dare not receive it. *So many Obſtacles, alas! are ever in the Way, That no Reformation can be expected from the Clergy.*

I could proceed now and ſhew, That our *firſt Goſpel*, altho' we ſhould ſuppoſe it penn'd by an *Apoſtle's Hand*, hath nevertheleſs ſince its Publication, undergone many Changes, and been grievouſly adulterated and abuſed; but this Matter having been touch'd upon before, both in the *Diſſertation* and *Defence*, and this Goſpel prov'd to be in the whole *Apocryphal*, it would to be loſt Labour after that to go about proving it in ſome Parts corrupt. Therefore I ſhall conclude after making one Obſervation or two, upon the *Ignorance* of Chriſtians in general, and the injurious *Practice* of the (Proteſtant) Clergy in particular, with Regard to Holy Scripture.

A Man that hath lived any Time in the World, cannot but have obſerv'd in Converſation, upon what ſlender and uncertain Principles *Chriſtians* embrace the Scriptures as the *Word of God*.

Moſt Men, conſcious of their own Inſufficiency, ſee plainly, that as Things have been carry'd and are now blended and perplex'd, they are no ways able to make proper Inquiries into the Truth of *Reveal'd Religion*, or to unravel the many Myſteries

of

of it. Of Neceſſity therefore, they reſign their Underſtandings to their Teachers, and become Members of ſome Religious Sect, they know not, nor can poſſibly learn, why—— So likewiſe they receive the Scriptures as divinely inſpir'd, without concerning themſelves about their Riſe, or the Ways by which they arriv'd at the Character they now poſſeſs; not one Chriſtian in a Thouſand, having any other, than a Faith purely implicit in that Reſpect. And yet ſuch Zealots are the moſt in this Faith without Knowledge, that if a Man cannot run their Lengths, and believe even juſt as they do, they preſently fall to railing, and doing you all the Miſchief they can for God's Sake. And this, Experience teaches, is but too true, even of *Proteſtants*, as well as *Papiſts*, the ſame rabid ſenſeleſs Zeal, burning with equal Fury in both. Neither is the particular Conduct of the Clergy again leſs miſchievous and provoking.

For tho' ('tis true) in Proteſtant and free States, they permit us to have the Scriptures in poſſeſſion, and make a pious Shew of admoniſhing us to read them often. Yet what is moſt abuſive, they will not ſuffer us to put our own Conſtruction on what we read, and form our Judgments and Belief accordingly; having before hand ſet Bounds to theſe, by certain Creeds, and Articles (they call 'em) of Religion; the Tranſgreſſion of which, not the moſt rational Conviction on our Part ſhall juſtify. Much leſs will they endure, that the Laity ſhould dare to diſpute the Authority of any one Book which they (the Clergy) have enliſted in their ſacred Canon. In either of which Caſes, they have in all Countries, where the Civil Magiſtrate doth not interpoſe, provided Laws to puniſh Men unmercifully, with Confiſcations, Impriſonment, and even Death itſelf.

Which diabolical Practice, proceeding as many think, from no other poſſible Cauſe, than a latent

 Diſtruſt

Diſtruſt thoſe Men have of their own *Faith*, hath provoked ſome to reject all *Revelation* in groſs, and in others it hath raiſed a deep rooted Jealouſy, that great Part of it is not genuine, and that was it brought fairly to the Teſt, it could not ſtand an impartial Examination; to which Scepticiſm nothing hath contributed more than the weak, evaſive, and fallacious Arguments and Evidence, the moſt zealous and learned Defenders of *Revelation* have (careleſly) produced, as often as they have undertaken to anſwer the *Suggeſtions of Infidels* againſt it.

Look into the moſt wretched *Apologetics* and *Diſputations* of the Antients, and ſee upon what low Argument and idle Tales and Fables they ground the Proof of the *Chriſtian Faith*; of which ſome groſs Inſtances might be given out of *Juſtin M. Tertullian Lactantius* and the reſt of them; to the great Scandal of *Chriſtianity* in thoſe Days, and the Scorn of *Unbelievers* in theſe. But to paſs over Antiquity.

If we caſt our Eye even upon modern Controverſy, we ſhall find little elſe to ſatisfy and convince the unprejudiced, impartial and diſcerning Mind; for here again we often meet with the Acts of *Pilate*, *Phlegon's* Eclipſe, fabulous Accounts of Numbers of Martyrs, pretended Conceſſions of Jews and Heathens, ceaſing of Oracles, forg'd Paſſages in prophane Authors, the corrupt Writings of credulous enthuſiaſtical Party-Fathers, Forgeries again under their Names, Apoſtolic Tradition and the like; all urg'd and inſiſted on as grand Proofs of the *Goſpel Diſpenſation*. And if we deſcend to the Books of H. Scripture, we ſhall find the Clergy ſuch partial Defenders, and many Times ſo ignorant of what they call and bow down to as their moſt *holy Canon*, that little Satisfaction can be reap'd on that Head, either from the Pulpit or the Preſs, very few treating at all upon the Genuineneſs, and due Tranſmiſ-

ſion of its Parts or caring to let us know in what particular Ages, or by what Means the whole came by Degrees to be eſtabliſh'd as at this Day; or laſtly, what Authority any one Man or Aſſembly of Men in late Times could have, to ſtipulate for the whole Catholic Church, in an Affair of ſo great Moment, as was that of compiling a Digeſt of ſacred infallible Scripture, about which neither *Jeſus Chriſt*, nor his *Apoſtles*, nor any of their *immediate Followers* ever concern'd themſelves, or left any one Inſtruction or Preſage about it.

I never met with a Clergyman in my Life (and I have often put the Queſtion) that could give me a tolerable Reaſon, why a tranſlated Goſpel, tranſlated by we know not whom, out of a difficult complex Language, whoſe original was never ſeen, nor any one Copy to compare it with; why ſuch a Goſpel I ſay, ſhould be admitted into the *Canon*, and ſtand there unmoleſted, as of equal Credit and Authority with other Goſpels, of whoſe Originals 'tis preſum'd we have approved Copies.

As oft as any Queſtion of this Nature comes in the Way of the Vindicator he is willing to ſhift it off to the *Fathers* and *Church-Tradition* --- He is very ſure (Vind. p. 74) "That be this firſt Goſpel of "ours a *Tranſlation*, or be it a *Copy*, the Fathers "were not in the wrong in receiving it" --- He ſays again ibid. p. 42 "That the Evidence for a Reli-"gion reveal'd 1700 Years ago, muſt in the Rea-"ſon and Nature of the Thing in ſome Meaſure "depend upon *Tradition*" --- I am afraid a great many will be apt to laugh at a Religion 1700 Years old depending upon Tradition (that is) a *Tradition*, our Author means ſet up and eſtabliſhed three or four hundred Years after the Fact, by a Set of Eccleſiaſtics, the moſt ignorant and moſt corrupt of all Mortals---A *Tradition* conveyed down to us by one particular *Sect*, or prevailing Party of *Chriſtians* only;

ly; and laſtly, a *Tradition*, ſo far as it relates to the *Goſpel in Diſpute*, uncertain, irregular, and which carries no Probability of Truth with it, being founded upon no *Literature*, but upon the looſe *Reveries*, and fond *Credulity* of the Vulgar, from whom we receive it.

And now 'tis to be hop'd the Vindicator and thoſe that ſet him to work, have received their Anſwer---If more hath been divulged than they may think expedient, and the Nakedneſs of our firſt Goſpel too much expoſed, thoſe Points which the Vindicator himſelf brought into Controverſy made it neceſſary; tho' nothing hath been urg'd but with a Plainneſs and Gravity becoming the Subject---The Vindicator may ſcribble on now as faſt as he ſhall be directed, and plume himſelf over his own Works; but he ſhall never provoke me to diſpute with him farther on this Head, and toil againſt his endleſs Fallacies and Evaſions---Enough hath been ſaid to the Wiſe, who diveſting themſelves of all Prejudice, will by comparing the Arguments eaſily judge on which Side Reaſon and Truth ſtand.

FINIS.

ERRATA.

Pag. 20. line 21. *for* God the Supreme Being, *read* the Son of God. pag. 23. line 24. *for* is ſuch a Recommendation of, *read* was taking ſuch a Method to recommend. pag. 24. line ult. *read* ſuffer. pag. 49. line 9. *for* alluded, *read* eluded. pag. 54. *for* uſe, *read* uſed.